BOROONDARA

Nature Strip Planting Guidelines (DRAFT)

2025

1 Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The City of Boroondara acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and original custodians of this land, and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

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2 Introduction

Nature strips account for a surprising amount of public land within Boroondara. They have a range of important functions — practical, aesthetic and environmental.

For a variety of reasons, residents may be interested in renovating their nature strip, and may wish to convert it from a conventional mown grass nature strip to an alternative landscape treatment. The motivation behind a nature strip renovation can vary, for example:

- to support local biodiversity by planting indigenous or native plants
- to replace grass that is failing or performing poorly
- to beautify and bring visual interest to the nature strip
- to avoid the maintenance of regular mowing
- to avoid or minimise the need for watering, herbicide or pesticide use.

However, before changing a nature strip to anything other than mown grass, residents need to apply for a Nature Strip Planting Permit from Council, and to comply with these guidelines.

Please be aware that if your property and the adjoining nature strip are situated on an arterial road, these guidelines do not apply. Arterial roads are roads that are managed by the Department of Transport and Planning and provide the principal routes for the movement of people and goods. A list of arterial roads in Boroondara can be found in Appendix 1. You can also find out if your property is in such a location using the interactive map of Department of Transport and Planning managed roads. In you wish to undertake planting on your nature strip in such locations, please contact metro_workswithinroadreserve@roads.vic.gov.au

If you have previously been granted a permit under former guidelines, you are not required to alter your nature strip to conform with these guidelines.

3 Functions and benefits of nature strips

Nature strips refer to the area of public land between a private property boundary and the road, kerb or gutter. The land is Council-owned and controlled, and technically part of the 'road reserve'.

This land is set aside for a number of purposes, providing space for:

- footpaths for pedestrians, prams, mobility scooters and other permitted people movements
- people to get in and out of motor vehicles
- infrastructure for essential services such as water, sewer, gas, telephone and power lines
- the establishment of street trees
- placement of waste and recycling bins for kerbside collection
- street lighting, bus stops, bus shelters and seats
- enabling clear 'line of sight' between pedestrians, vehicle drivers and cyclists at driveways, road curves and intersections.

Importantly, beyond their practical functions, nature strips have many environmental benefits. Nature strips in residential areas are open and largely unpaved, allowing for penetration of rainwater and air into the soil, which improves soil health and promotes growth of nearby trees and gardens. Both street trees and the permeable ground on the nature strip act to reduce the amount of stormwater runoff and pollution that flows into local drains and waterways. Trees and other nature strip vegetation help shade and cool the local environment, making for more pleasant streets, especially during hot summer weather.

Vegetated nature strips can act as 'stepping stones' for local flora and fauna. Populations of native plants and animals living in limited, isolated areas face the danger of inbreeding and potential local extinction. Establishing natural pathways with native and indigenous grasses, ground covers, and shrubs can offer crucial habitats for local birds, insects, and reptiles, enriching these isolated spots and promoting better mobility throughout Boroondara. Features like the Yarra River, various creeks, and the city's continuous walkways function as corridors for biodiversity. These pathways help to link habitats and allow animals (together with the seeds and pollen they transport on their bodies) to traverse tree canopies, bushes, and the ground, seeking partners and fresh sources of food. Private gardens and nature strips that welcome wildlife can enhance existing corridors, forging new connections and serving as 'stepping stones' for wildlife.

4 Who is responsible for maintaining nature strips?

4.1 Property owners

- Council relies on the goodwill and established community expectation that residents will mow and/or otherwise maintain the nature strip abutting their property to present a neat and tidy street frontage.
- Residents are invited to help support the health of street trees by watering the tree(s) outside their property during dry conditions.
- Residents are not permitted to plant, prune or remove any trees within the nature strip. To enquire about the possibility of an additional street tree, please contact Council's Customer Service Centre on 9278 4444 or boroondara@boroondara.vic.gov.au
- If the nature strip has been damaged by private building works, the property owner or builder is responsible for repair.

4.2 Boroondara Council

- Council issues permits for nature strip renovations in accordance with these guidelines.
- Council is responsible for planting and maintaining street trees in accordance with its tree management policies.
- Council does not undertake renovation or maintenance (including mowing, watering or spraying with herbicides) of nature strips.
- Council reserves the right to remove without prior consultation or warning any feature it deems a significant and imminent threat to public safety or to undertake any urgent works such as tree works.
- Council reserves the right to widen footpaths without prior consultation or warning which may impact on nature strips and any garden beds created.
- Reinstatement of the nature strip as a result of Council works is to a 'normal condition' (generally topsoil with grass seeds).

4.3 Utility authorities

- Utility authorities (such as Melbourne Water or electricity network providers) may access nature strips to undertake repair, maintenance or renewal works on services (for example, to stormwater drains, mains water or gas pipes). After these works are complete, the service authority is responsible for repair of the nature strip to a 'normal condition' (generally topsoil with grass seeds). The service authority is not obliged to reinstate alternative plantings. Council is not responsible for replacing plants or landscape materials as a result of such works.

5 Options for your nature strip planting

5.1 Nature Strip Planting where no permit is required

Drought tolerant exotic and/or native grass lawn

If you are re-establishing a grassed nature strip due to failure or poor performance of your existing grass, give careful consideration to your choice of grass species.

Choose drought tolerant or 'warm season' grasses as, once established, these will remain in good health with little to no watering. Use of certain native grasses can provide a soft lawn like appearance and drought tolerance. Recommended native species are Weeping Grass (*Microlaena stipoides*), Kneed Wallaby Grass (*Austrodanthonia geniculata*) and Clustered Wallaby Grass (*Austrodanthonia racemosum*). These species are indigenous to the area and require only periodic mowing.

No permit is required to establish or maintain grassed lawn within the nature strip.

5.2 Nature Strip planting where a permit is required

Planting with groundcovers and/or low growing shrubs

Use of suitable groundcovers, tufting grasses, wildflowers and/or low growing shrubs within a mulched nature strip can provide a soft and beautiful alternative to mown grass.

Planting nature strips with indigenous or native groundcovers and small shrubs can provide precious extra habitat for native birds, insects and lizards.

Appropriate plant selection is critical and helps ensure the landscaped nature strip is attractive and can be easily maintained.

Select plants that are:

- indigenous or Australian native groundcovers, grasses or small shrubs and/or low growing non-native plants
- suitable for the climate, soil type and amount of sun or shade
- able to be pruned to no more than 50cm high at maturity (to maintain pedestrian and driver 'line of sight').

You must avoid using any plants that are known environmental weeds, prickly or spiky, poisonous, or a common cause of allergies. It's also worth carefully considering the placement and spread of plants. For example, unless you have a large area to cover, avoid groundcovers that spread very wide and grow quickly, or you will need very regular pruning to keep the footpath and kerb clear. To support healthy waterways and local biodiversity, it is best to minimise using fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides.

Here are just a few examples of low growing indigenous and native plants suitable for nature strips. A list of recommended plants can be found on Council's website.



Creeping Boobialla
Myoporum parvifolium



Tufted Bluebell
Wahlenbergia communis



Running Postman
Kennedia prostrata



Yellow bulbine-lily
Bulbine bulbosa

6 Guidelines for nature strip planting

Residents wanting to undertake nature strip planting will need to comply with the following guidelines:

1. All underground services (which may include gas, electricity, telecommunications, water supply, sewer and stormwater) must be be located prior to any works. Contact Before you Dig Australia (BYDA) to identify service locations. Note that BYDA plans don't show service lead-ins to property. Use the location of gas and water meters, and any electricity junction pits in the footpath to help you work out where these services are likely to traverse the nature strip. This step is critical as failure to locate and protect underground infrastructure can result in serious injury (or even death) and/or disruption to essential services. Additionally, you would be responsible for the cost of repairing the damaged service infrastructure.

2. Plants selected for your nature strip must be indigenous or Australian native groundcovers, grasses or small shrubs and/or low growing non-native plants. They be maintained no more than 50cm high (to ensure pedestrian and driver 'line of sight'). A list of recommended species can be found here.



3. You are not permitted to grow plants that are known environmental weeds, prickly or spiky, poisonous, or a common cause of allergies. Please refer to our Recognising and managing environmental weeds in Boroondara booklet.

4. Planting of trees on nature strips by residents is not permitted. However, if you are interested in the possibility of an additional street tree on your nature strip, please contact Council's Customer Service Centre on 9278 4444 or boroondara@boroondara.vic.gov.au and we will assess whether your nature strip is suitable for an additional tree.

5. You must not plant within 50cm of the base of any tree (measured from lowest visible point of the tree base). Mulch is permitted within this 50cm clearance, though care must be taken to ensure that the depth of the mulch does not exceed 75mm.

6. The use of hand tools when working within the nature strip is required (no machinery).

7. To minimise risk and inconvenience to people using the footpath or road, keep all plants and mulch within the nature strip area (not spilling onto the footpath or road).

8. Ensure nature strip vegetation allows easy opening of car doors, pedestrian access to the footpath and placement of waste and recycling bins for kerbside pickup. Maintain a clear zone of 60cm wide along the nature strip edge closest to the kerb/road. Only mulch, granitic sand, and/or ground covers (up to 15cm height) are permitted within this clear zone.



9. One or two flat and non-slip ‘stepping stone’ pavers, laid flush with the ground level, may be used to help guide foot traffic through a planted nature strip. Pavers are required to be non- slip in accordance with current Australian Standards and must be at least 2 metres from the base of any tree.

10. Soil, plants and mulch must not cover or impede access to assets, service infrastructure and street furniture. Maintain a clear zone of only mulch, ground covers or grasses within 1m of fire hydrants and manholes and 50 cm of power poles.

11. If the nature strip contains any water sensitive urban design (WSUD) treatments, the resident must not interfere with it in any way.

12. If the nature strip contains a bus stop you must ensure that safe access to, and use of, the bus stop is in no way hindered.

13. Laying of additional concrete or asphalt is not permitted.

14. Altering the width of the nature strip, road, kerb or channel is not permitted.

15. Nature strip surface treatments need to be installed so the finished surface level is flush with the surrounding footpath, kerb or crossover.

16. It is not permitted to interfere with the natural levels or drainage of the street (for example, through excessive mounding of soil, use of loose materials, or other changes that block drainage).

17. Only undertake landscaping works on the nature strip directly abutting your property. If more than one property fronts the nature strip, either all parties need to agree, or in the case of a body corporate, the body corporate must agree and apply for the permit.

18. If you are renting the property, you must have permission from the owner/landlord before undertaking any work.

19. The following are not permitted: hard landscaping elements including stakes, star pickets, retaining walls, raised edging, planter boxes/ beds, bollards or ornaments, protruding rocks/boulders or timber.



20. Planting of fruit or vegetable crops is not permitted. While there are benefits to using nature strips to grow fruit and vegetables, there are also risks and for this reason this option is not supported by Council. Key concerns include damage to street tree roots from soil cultivation and health risks associated with potential soil contamination.



21. Impervious or synthetic weed mats (for example, plastic sheeting under mulch) are not permitted.

22. The use of straw, underfelt, scoria, blue metal, pebble or other loose stone mulches are not permitted.

23. Synthetic grass is not permitted.

24. Irrigation systems are not permitted.



25. Suitable safety precautions such as fencing, signage and other public safety measures must be put in place during construction, as appropriate. These measures are not to interfere with pedestrian or vehicle access and are the responsibility of the resident/owner. Council accepts no liability related to works carried out by the public.

26. After the nature strip planting, you must agree to maintain the nature strip to the standards outlined in these guidelines. Council has the authority to remove any plantings or works that impact on the safety of the public or public services. In most cases the landholder will be informed by Council first and have the opportunity to rectify the plantings. However, Council reserves the right to remove without prior consultation or warning any feature it deems a significant and imminent threat to public safety, street tree health, or to undertake urgent works.

7 Applying for a permit

Residents wishing to plant on their nature strip – except for drought tolerant exotic and/or native grass lawn – must be granted a permit before commencing work. This is a requirement under Council's Amenity Local Law.

Please note that Council reserves the right to remove without prior consultation or warning any feature:

- that does not comply with these guidelines
- that it deems a significant and imminent threat to public safety or street tree health
- to undertake urgent works (including tree works).

Applying for a permit is important because it confirms that you are aware of – and committed to complying with – these guidelines. This helps ensure the core functions and public safety of the nature strip is protected.

Applying for a permit is a simple and automated process, simply visit www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/naturestrips and complete the online form that asks you to confirm you agree to adhere to these guidelines. Once completed you will receive an automated email granting you permission to proceed with your nature strip planting in accordance with these guidelines.

8 Appendix 1. Arterial roads in Boroondara

Asquith St (Kew, Kew East)

Auburn Rd (Hawthorn - north of Riversdale Rd, Hawthorn East)

Balwyn Rd (Balwyn, Balwyn North, Canterbury)

Barkers Rd (Hawthorn, Hawthorn East, Kew)

Belmore Rd (Balwyn, Balwyn North)

Bulleen Rd (Balwyn North)

Burke Rd (Balwyn, Balwyn North, Camberwell, Canterbury, Deepdene, Glen Iris, Hawthorn East, Kew, Kew East)

Burwood Rd (Hawthorn, Hawthorn East)

Camberwell Rd (Camberwell, Hawthorn East)

Canterbury Rd (Camberwell, Canterbury, Surrey Hills)

Church St (Hawthorn)

Cotham Rd (Kew)

Denmark St (Kew)

Doncaster Rd (Balwyn North)

Earl St (Kew)

Glenferrie Rd (Hawthorn, Kew)

Harp Rd (Kew, Kew East)

High St (Ashburton, Glen Iris)

High St (Kew, Kew East)

High Street South (Kew)

Power St (Hawthorn)

Princess St (Kew)

Rathmines Rd (Camberwell, Hawthorn, Hawthorn East)

Riversdale Rd (Camberwell, Hawthorn, Hawthorn East, Surrey Hills)

Seymour Grove (Camberwell)

Stanhope Grove (Camberwell)

Studley Park Rd (Kew)

Trafalgar Rd (Camberwell)

Toorak Rd (Camberwell, Glen Iris, Hawthorn, Hawthorn East)

Tooronga Rd (Glen Iris, Hawthorn, Hawthorn East)

Valerie St (Kew East)

Wallen Rd (Hawthorn)

Warrigal Rd (Ashburton, Camberwell, Glen Iris, Surrey Hills)

Whitehorse Rd (Balwyn, Deepdene, Surrey Hills)

Yarra Blvd (Kew)