

Nature strip planting guidelines

Frankston City Council



Lifestyle Capital of Victoria



Road reserves of local streets are made up of a roadway, nature strip and footpath. Within this space, nature strips play an important part in the environmental and social health of our city. This document defines the role and benefits of nature strips and provides landowners with guidance and information on how to obtain a permit to undertake nature strip planting.

What is a nature strip?

The term 'nature strip' refers to the area of road reserve between the property boundary and the road kerb or shoulder in roads and streets, excluding any public footpath or pavement. A nature strip is considered part of the road reserve under the Road Management Act 2004 and Road Safety Act 1986.

This land is set aside for a variety of uses including the provision of essential services such as telephone, gas, water, sewerage and electricity supply (above ground

on poles or underground), public lighting and public transport (bus stops and shelters).

Nature strips also provide safe direct access for service personnel such as postal staff and service maintenance staff, as well as providing a location for the placement of household refuse and recycling bins and clearance for entry and exit from motor vehicles for passengers, prams or wheelchairs. Nature strips provide an open space that allows clear viewing lines for pedestrians, vehicle traffic and cyclists at intersections, driveways and curves.



What are other benefits of a nature strip?

Nature strips also provide the opportunity for the development of good streetscape character and for the growth of street trees. They can complement the natural settings of the neighborhood and provide valuable habitat for fauna whilst visually softening the effect of the harder surfaces of road, footpath and driveway paving, fences and buildings.

An open, unpaved area of land allows for the penetration of rainwater and air into the soil, improving soil health, promoting healthy growth of street and garden trees and reduces the amount of stormwater runoff and pollution transported by storm water into waterways.

Appropriate plantings into this space can enhance the aesthetics of the streetscape, provided that they are well designed and maintained. Careful species selection can also contribute to local biodiversity by providing valuable habitat and food sources for indigenous fauna, including native bees and other pollinators. In some situations, the combination of street trees which have been under planted with appropriate species, can create 'stepping stones' which allows wildlife to move between natural reserves, thereby forming part of an urban wildlife corridor. This is particularly valuable when nature strip plantings are located adjacent to natural reserves.



Who is responsible for maintaining nature strips?

Frankston City Council

Council is the responsible authority of nature strips throughout Frankston City. Council relies on the established expectation that residents will maintain nature strips in order to present a neat and tidy street frontage. Council does not carry out renovation or maintenance such as mowing, watering or herbicide application, but must ensure that nature strips do not pose a hazard. Council will remediate hazards to the public when deemed necessary.

Council does select, plant and maintain all street trees (see 'What about Street Trees?').

Frankston City residents

There is an established community expectation that residents will conduct basic maintenance of nature strips. All works, other than basic maintenance (such as mowing or sweeping), in the roadway, nature strip or footpath requires the approval of Council.

In addition a permit would be required for building works which may impact upon the nature strip. In these cases the permit holder would be required to reinstate the impacted area to a grassed nature strip standard.

Service authorities

Nature strips contain infrastructure such as electricity, telephone, drainage, water, sewer and gas which may require renewal, upgrade, repair or renovation by the associated service authority. In addition new services are required from time to time. Service Authorities have a statutory right to use the road reserve to provide services for the community.

If the nature strip becomes damaged during service authority works, the authority is responsible for nature strip repair and reinstatement. Where this is the case and plantings installed by residents are removed, the service authority is only required to reinstate the road nature strip to normal condition, such as filling holes and sowing with grass seed .

What about street trees?

Street trees are provided and maintained by Council, in accordance with its Urban Forest Policy. As a guide, one tree per frontage and up to two trees per sideage (corner blocks) are planted in residential nature strips. These are selected from species approved by Council. Street trees are generally planted in the center of the nature strip with due regard for the maintenance of services (both overhead and underground) and sight clearance lines for traffic.

Residents are not permitted to plant trees within nature strips due to the complexities of street tree species selection and the ongoing maintenance requirements, and the impact street trees may have on essential services. Council is responsible for out pruning and clearance of street trees in accordance with relevant maintenance specifications and has allocated budgets for these operations. Council may plant street trees where none exist even if a permit is granted for a landscape that does not include a tree.



When planting beneath an existing street trees it is important to avoid damage to sensitive tree roots. Hand tools only are to be used to excavate planting holes and planting within 600mm of the trunk of street trees is not allowed. If any significant roots (>30mm) are encountered, adjust planting location to nearest suitable position.

To request a street tree, please contact Council on
1300 322 322 or via
<https://www.frankston.vic.gov.au/Environment-and-Waste/Environment/Trees>



What options are available for planting nature strips?

Council supports the improvement of nature strips via appropriate plantings, provided that the underlying purposes of the nature strip can be maintained while ensuring the ongoing safety of the general public. When a resident wishes to make changes to a grassed nature strip, the cost of these changes and the ongoing maintenance is to be borne by the resident.

Traditionally, mown grass nature strips are the most common form of nature strip treatment in Frankston City. They offer the resident a low maintenance nature strip and are compatible with other uses of the land and neighbouring nature strips.

An alternative to grass is a planted and mulched nature strip. This provides a soft and visually pleasing alternative when well maintained. This treatment involves the use of the nature strip as a garden bed with the area being mulched with organic mulch and planted with low growing indigenous or native plants.

This is often done to create a wildlife friendly extension of the home garden and remove the need to regularly mow the area.

The treatment of the nature strip in this manner must still allow for the safe passage of pedestrians as specified within the checklist below (refer to 'When is a permit required?').

Council requirement checklist

The basic requirements are as follows;

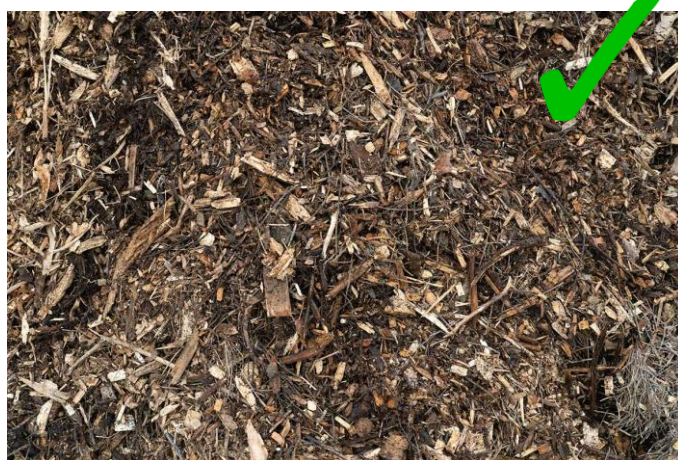
- ☐ A minimum width of 1.5m is to be retained and kept clear at all times to allow for pedestrians and postal services.
- ☐ No plantings taller than 25mm are to occur within 1m of the curb, to allow access to and from vehicles. This area may be mulched, mown lawn or groundcover that can withstand foot traffic.
- ☐ Plants are to be maintained at a height below 300mm from the outside edge (excluded clearance area), to a maximum of 600mm at the center of the planting area to maintain visibility for the safety of pedestrians and road users.
- ☐ Hard landscaping elements such as rocks, timber, retaining walls, and ornaments must not be used.
- ☐ Only organic mulches may be used, which must be kept stable and properly contained within the nature strip. Mulch materials larger than 25mm must not be used. No dyed mulches are allowed.
- ☐ Plantings must not obscure or restrict access to existing infrastructure such as service pits, power poles and water valves. In particular there must be no obstruction to the use of fire hydrants and fire plugs.
- ☐ Service authority asset location must be obtained prior to any designing and planting. This can be obtained from Dial Before You Dig www.1100.com.au
- ☐ Only hand tools are to be used for planting to limit the potential for any damage to infrastructure or existing street trees.
- ☐ No plantings to occur within 600mm of the trunk of any existing street tree(s) to limit root damage.
- ☐ No digging beyond what is required to remove existing weeds or install plant stock is allowed (by hand only, no mechanical excavation permitted).

Plant selection

Only plants approved by Frankston City Council may be planted (as nominated in permit application). There is a strong preference for indigenous/native species as they are often the most drought resistant, low maintenance options, and provide significant biodiversity services. Exotic species will be considered on a case by case basis. No planting of environmental weeds will be approved.

When selecting plants for a nature strip garden, consideration must be given to the mature height of the plant, its ability to be easily maintained and general hardiness due to the often sub-optimal growing conditions found within nature strips (poor/hydrophobic soils, competition from existing street trees and existing infrastructure).

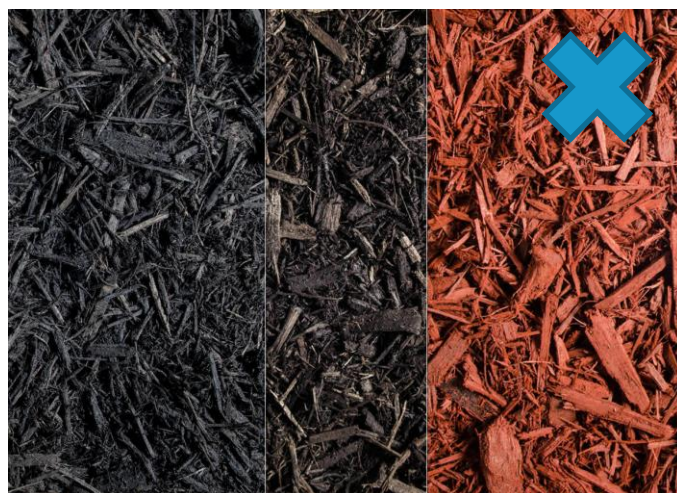
growth. Generally, it is best to lay mulch (maximum depth 50mm) before planting, as it is much easier to plant into, than spread after planting.



Preparing for planting

When preparing your nature strip for planting, the following should be taken into consideration:

- Removal of existing grasses/weeds is important when preparing a site for planting. This can be achieved by the use of herbicides (follow manufactures directions) or by preferred manual methods such as hand pulling, scalping with a lawn mower etc. No machinery (than then a domestic lawn mower) is to be used and no digging is to occur within 600mm of any existing street trees.
- Mulching using only organic, non-dyed mulches such as 'arborist' or 'bush' mulch is to be used. This type of mulch can easily be sourced through garden centers or by contacting local arborists. Mulch is a great way to protect soil and suppress weed





When is a permit required?

A permit is required whenever a property owner wishes to deviate from the standard 'mown lawn' nature strip. Provided that the proposed plantings aligns with the specifications within this document, a permit will be granted.

There is **no cost** to the applicant associated with applying/receiving a nature strip planting permit

Permits must comply generally with guidelines and information provided by Council. However, at its absolute discretion Council reserves the right to grant or refuse any permit application

If a property owner wishes to re-establish a poorly performing nature strip 'lawn' a permit is not required. If you wish to do this, consideration should be given to native grass species, such as Wallaby Grass and Weeping Grass (*Rytidosperma spp.* and *Microlaena stipoides*) which are native lawn replacements, drought resistant and provide biodiversity services.

Ongoing maintenance, (as with lawn mowing) is required to be undertaken by the resident. This includes maintaining the vegetation neatly and within specifications and removing weeds as they emerge. In 2-5 years, most of the organic mulch will have broken down through natural processes and will require replacement by the property owner to maintain aesthetics, retain moisture and suppress weed growth.



Why do I need a permit?

Council has a duty of care to provide a safe environment within the municipality. As the nature strip is public land, Council must avoid the creation of hazards, such as spiny plants covering footpaths, vegetation blocking sightlines for traffic and pedestrians or inappropriate objects located within the nature strip (e.g. rocks, built structures).

Nature strips also contain infrastructure which requires protection and could be damaged if inappropriate treatments, such as excessive excavation, inappropriate plantings etc. occurred.

These issues can be largely avoided by requiring a permit, which is reviewed by council officers, before commencement of works.

Before approval is sought, contact Dial Before You Dig www.1100.com.au to determine the location of underground services within the nature strip area. Care should always be taken when working near services to prevent personal injury. Any damage and resulting costs incurred to services caused by works undertaken by a permit holder remain the responsibility of the permit holder to remediate for the life of the planting



How do I get a permit?

Works are not to commence on any alterations to the nature strip without written consent from Council.

An application for 'Permit to plant within a nature strip' must be made detailing the following;

- Property owner name and contact details
- Property address
- Sketch outlining proposal *
- List of plants to be used **

*refer to Appendix 1 – Design sketch example

**refer to Appendix 2 – Approved planting list

Applications can be made online or completed and submitted to info@frankston.vic.gov.au or any customer service centre.



What if I undertake works without approval?

Council will take appropriate action to rectify tripping hazards or safety issues, or any other non-compliant works found within nature strips.

Property owners or permit holders will be required to address any matters identified to Council's satisfaction.

Council's Community Local Law requires that;

A person must not without a permit:

(a) plant or remove vegetation from a nature strip or undertake any landscaping on a nature strip, road or municipal place; or

(b) remove soil from a nature strip, road or municipal place.'

At its discretion, Council will take any or all steps available to ensure this requirement is met.

What if I move or sell the associated property?

In the event that a permit holder moves from or sells the property associated with a nature strip planting permit, it is the responsibility of the original permit applicant to either:

- contact Council with consent of the new owner to reissue the permit to the new property owners.
- continued to maintained the nature strip (in the event the owner tenants the property) or;
- ensure that the nature strip is returned to its original condition,

What works will not be approved within a nature strip?

- Irrigation systems
- Hard landscaping elements such as rocks, bluestone, retaining walls, steel edging, garden stakes, water features, letter boxes or other items deemed to be an obstruction or potential hazard by Council.
- Food gardens - food gardens are not allowed to be planted due to the health risks associated with potential soil contamination (heavy metals etc.), difficulty in maintaining plantings in neat condition and risk to gardener due to increased exposure to road side hazards (traffic).
- Modifying existing natural surface levels or drainage.
- Environmental weeds – no potential or established environmental weeds will be accepted
- Synthetic grass, weed matting or any other artificial soil covering.
- Only approved plants provided in your planting diagram can be used. Indigenous and native species are strongly preferred.
- Modification to nature strip to allow parking ie designated parking space(s) within planting plan.





Appendix 1 – Design sketch example

When applying for a permit, a sketch outline your planting plan is required. This should consist of a hand drawn 'mud map' which is then scanned or photographed and is attached to the permit application. An example of this is shown below.

This sketch should include the location of any:

- Dimensions of the nature strip area
- Location of services/infrastructure – footpath, existing street trees, crossovers, power poles, property boundaries, fire hydrants etc.
- Location of proposed planting areas (height less than 300mm outer edge and 600mm inner area)
- Proposed planting list; Common name, botanical name and mature height
- Demonstration of compliance with council requirements (refer to 'Council requirements checklist')

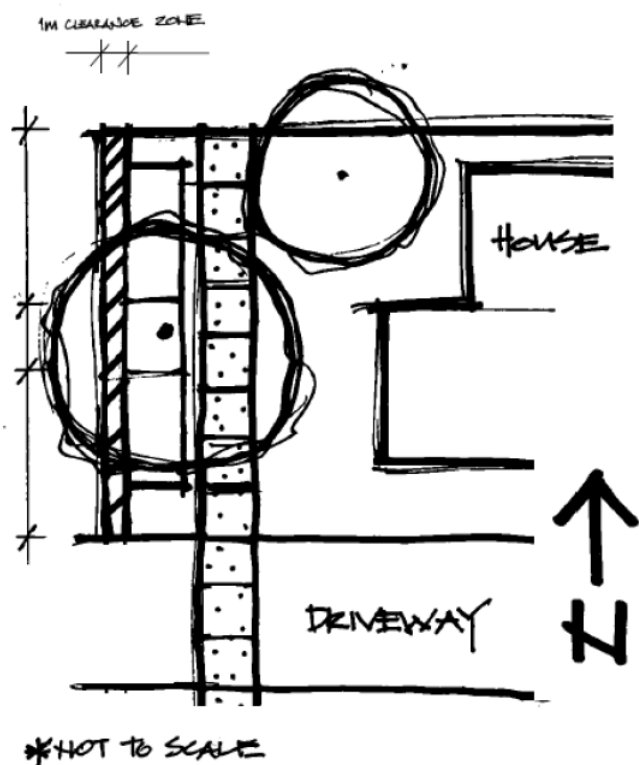
Planting species to be used		
Common Name	Species Name	Mature Height
Outer Planting edge less than 300mm		
Kidney Weed	Dichonra repens	5cm
Wattle Mat-rush	Lomandra filiformis	30cm
Common everlasting	Chrysocephalum apiculatum	30cm
Inner Planting area less than 600mm		
Coastal Tussock	Poa poiformis	60cm

Above: Example of species list to be included in permit application

< 600mm APPROVED
PLANTING HEIGHT

600mm CLEARANCE
FROM STREET TREE

< 300mm APPROVED
PLANTING HEIGHT





Appendix 2 - Recommended plant species

While the species below are recommended, other indigenous/native/exotic species will be considered, provided that they meet the requirements of these Guidelines. Generally, regular pruning will be required to maintain plantings at the heights set in these guidelines.

Refer to the Frankston Indigenous Plant booklet and website for more information on plants.

Please check the Frankston Indigenous Nursery or your local nursery for the availability of plant species

Indigenous to Frankton

Grasses and tussocks

Common name	Botanical name
Weeping Grass	<i>Microlaena stipoides</i>
Coastal tussock Grass	<i>Poa poiformis</i>
Soft tussock grass	<i>Poa morrisii</i>
Wallaby grass	<i>Rytidosperma spp.</i>
Common Tussock Grass	<i>Poa labillardierei</i>
Kangaroo Grass	<i>Themeda triandra</i>
Sword sedge	<i>Lepidosperma concavum</i>
Small-flowered Flax-lily	<i>Dianella brevicaulis</i>
Spiny Mat Rush	<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>
Long Purple-flag	<i>Patersonia occidentalis</i>
Knobby Club Rush	<i>Ficinia nodosa</i>
Wattle Mat-rush	<i>Lomandra filiformis</i>

Lilies

(These plant show themselves seasonally, dying back and then reappearing each year)

Common name	Botanical name
Chocolate Lily	<i>Arthropodium strictum</i>
Bulbine	<i>Bulbine bulbosa</i>

Grass Trigger Plant	<i>Stylidium graminifolium</i>
Vanilla lily	<i>Arthropodium milleflorum</i>

Small shrubs

(These plants will generally require more maintenance to remain within heights set within guidelines)

Common name	Botanical name
Coast or Grey Saltbush	<i>Atriplex cinerea</i>
Showy Bossiaea	<i>Bossiaea cinerea</i>
White Correa	<i>Correa alba</i>
Common Correa	<i>Correa reflexa</i>
Common Heath	<i>Epacris impressa</i>
Hop Goodenia	<i>Goodenia ovata</i>
Silky Guinea-flower	<i>Hibbertia sericea</i>
Cushion Bush	<i>Leucophyta brownii</i>
Common Beard-heath	<i>Leucopogon virgatus</i>
Coast Everlasting	<i>Ozothamnus turbinatus</i>
Coast Pomaderris	<i>Pomaderris paniculosa</i>
Golden Bush-pea	<i>Pultenaea gunnii</i>

Climbers

(When nothing is present to climb, these plants will act as vigorous ground covers)

Common name	Botanical name
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Common Apple-berry	<i>Billardiera mutabilis</i>
Small-leaved Clematis	<i>Clematis microphylla</i> var. <i>microphylla</i>
Love Creeper	<i>Comesperma volubile</i>
Common Flat-pea	<i>Platylobium obtusangulum</i>
Bower Spinach	<i>Tetragonia implexicoma</i>

Ground covers

(Generally these plants will stay within the heights set in guidelines, but will still require some maintenance)

Common name	Botanical name
Running postman	<i>Kennedia prostrata</i>
Bower Spinach	<i>Tetragonia implexicoma</i>
Noon flower	<i>Disphyma crassifolium</i>
Button everlasting	<i>Coronidium scorpioides</i>
Coast Daisy	<i>Brachycome parvula</i>
Kidney Weed	<i>Dichondra repens</i>
Nodding Saltbush	<i>Einadia nutans</i>
Common Rice flower	<i>Pimelea humilis</i>
Native Violet	<i>Viola hederacea</i>
Tall Bluebell	<i>Wahlenbergia stricta</i>
Austral Stork's Bill	<i>Pelargonium australe</i>
Karkalla	<i>Carpobrotus rossii</i>
Common everlasting	<i>Chrysocephalum apiculatum</i>
Bidgee-widgee	<i>Acaena novea-zealandiae</i>
Coast Daisy	<i>Brachyscome parvula</i>
Common Rice-flower	<i>Pimelia humilis</i>
Austral Stork's-bill	<i>Pelargonium australe</i>

