

Cardinia Shire Council
Nature strip guidelines

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These guidelines aim to ensure that if a nature strip is modified, it is landscaped and maintained appropriately while minimising risk to the community.

This document is a guideline only. Council will consider each application on a case-by-case basis.

These guidelines include:

- definition and purpose of nature strips
- Council responsibilities
- areas to which this policy applies
- process for applying to alter a nature strip
- appropriate options for changing a nature strip
- installation, maintenance and ongoing requirements
- penalties for non-compliance.

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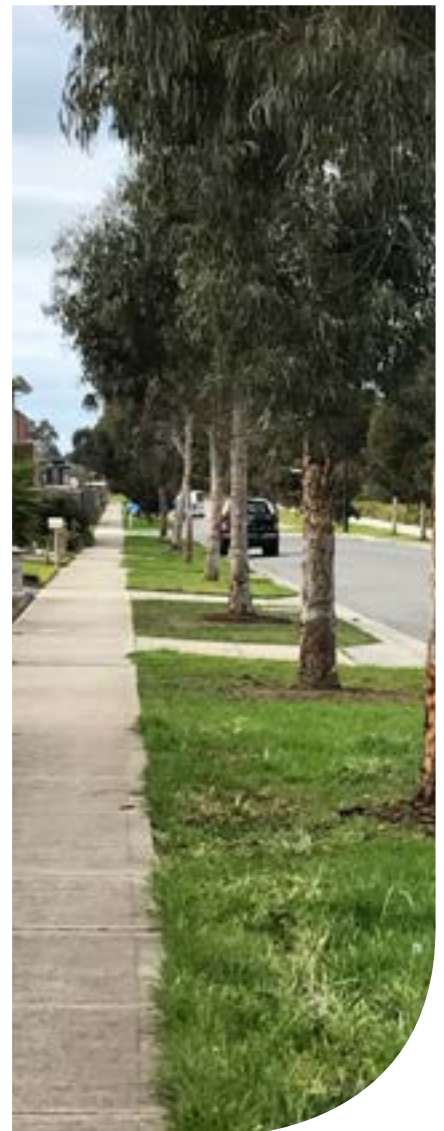
To what do these guidelines apply/not apply?

These guidelines apply to:

- Urban areas
 - Built-up areas with streetlights that do not include the following
 - tree reserves or easements
 - water sensitive urban design (WSUD) installations, swales or raingardens
 - VicRoads reserves.
- Rural areas
 - Areas that are outside the urban growth zone and are not subject to
 - roadside slashing program
 - native vegetation protection
 - fire management overlays.



Tree reserve.



Standard nature strip.

To what do these guidelines apply/not apply? (cont.)



Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) installation.



Rural nature strip area.

To what do these guidelines apply/not apply? (cont.)

The guidelines do NOT apply to:

- Commercial areas
 - areas where businesses are located. Please refer to other local laws, such as *Cardinia Shire Council Footpath Trading Code*
- VicRoads arterial roads.



Commercial (industrial) nature strip area.



Commercial nature strip areas (above and top).



VicRoad arterial road.

Introduction

What is a nature strip?

A nature strip is the area of public land between a property boundary and the back of the kerb, excluding the footpath or other assets such as driveways, utility pits and fire hydrants.

What is the purpose of a nature strip?

Nature strips are an important part of our built form. Their key purpose is to provide:

- space for light poles, power poles, underground services and road signage
- space for postal services to access mail boxes and utility service providers to access utilities
- visibility for road users and pedestrians, especially at intersections and curves
- clear access for members of the public to access footpaths, driveways and house lots from the kerb
- space for kerbside parking of vehicles (not on nature strip) by allowing for door opening space between parked vehicles and the footpath
- practical conditions for emptying waste bins
- unimpeded access to fire hydrants.

Nature strips also offer other benefits such as:

- absorbing rainfall and catching pollutants before these run off into storm water
- helping to cool surrounding areas
- increasing biodiversity and providing habitat
- increasing the aesthetic and environmental appeal of surrounding streets and neighbourhoods.

Who maintains nature strips?

Residents and property owners

Residents and property owners are expected to maintain the nature strip abutting their property. Required maintenance includes keeping the nature strip tidy and level by weeding and mowing; removing litter; removing leaf fall and tree debris; and edging turf.

The following are exceptions to this.

- Street trees that have been planted by Council as part of Council's street tree policy. Residents must not prune or interfere with Council-maintained street trees or plant their own tree(s).
- Garden beds (i.e. entrances, features) installed by a developer. These will be maintained by the developer for an agreed period of time, after which they become Council assets and are then maintained by Council.
- Utilities located within the nature strip (i.e. gas, water, electricity and telecommunications); these are maintained by the utility provider.

Council

Council's responsibility for nature strips is to:

- minimise risk to the community by ensuring a compliant space is provided
- support the safety of road users
- provide roadside slashing for fuel reduction and sight-line requirements in rural areas.

Property owners and residents must not modify nature strips in any way without written permission from Council.



Developer-installed garden beds.

Permit process

Approval is required by Council for any changes to an existing nature strip.

- Why?
 - Nature strips are public land and Council needs to minimise risk to the community from any modifications by ensuring that the guidelines are being adhered to.
- How?
 - Firstly, check to see if what you want to do is consistent with Council's guidelines, as outlined in this document
 - Then, submit an application online to alter your nature strip.
Go to: https://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/nature_strips
 - When you receive approval from Council, safely install your changes and maintain your new nature strip.

What does Council allow?

Grass

Grass is the dominant nature strip treatment in suburban environments.

- drought tolerant grasses such as couch or kikuyu are encouraged
- maintained to a maximum height of 300mm
- surface must be even from back of kerb to footpath with no potholes or trip hazards
- no permit is required to maintain the grass on the nature strip.

Permeable surfaces

Permeable surfaces allow water to filter through to reach the underlying surface prior to entering the drainage system, reducing pollution and the impacts of storm water.

Permeable surfaces are allowed under the following conditions:

- fine gravel mulches (75mm depth), such as washed granitic sand, Tuscan or Lilydale toppings, with a maximum particle size of 10mm
- organic mulch (75mm depth), such as graded bark or multi-bark mix that is resistant to disturbance by wind and rain, as long as it is properly contained and can't spread over footpaths or gutters
- are not to be used as areas for parking as per *Road Management Act 2004*
- must ensure there is no digging or compaction around drip line and rootball of trees
- must be kept maintained to a level surface from the back of kerb to the footpath with no potholes or tripping hazards
- must be weeded and topped up as required.



Permeable surface installed.

Permit process (cont.)

Approved planting

Mulched garden beds that are planted out are permitted under the following conditions:

- mulch must be kept stable and properly maintained
- planting of indigenous species is preferred
- alternatively, native and/or drought resistant species should be considered
- plants including flowers or seed heads must grow no higher than 600mm
- plants must be a minimum 500mm from the back of the kerb, edge of footpath and edge of driveways
- footpath must be kept clear of plants at all times
- street trees must not be damaged or impacted by the works
- sufficient clear space must be left for rubbish collection (150cm x 60cm space is required for both bins, with a 50cm clear space between any other obstructions).

See figures 1 and 2 for direction.

Hydrants, fire plugs or access pits must not be obscured by plantings and should be available for access at all times.

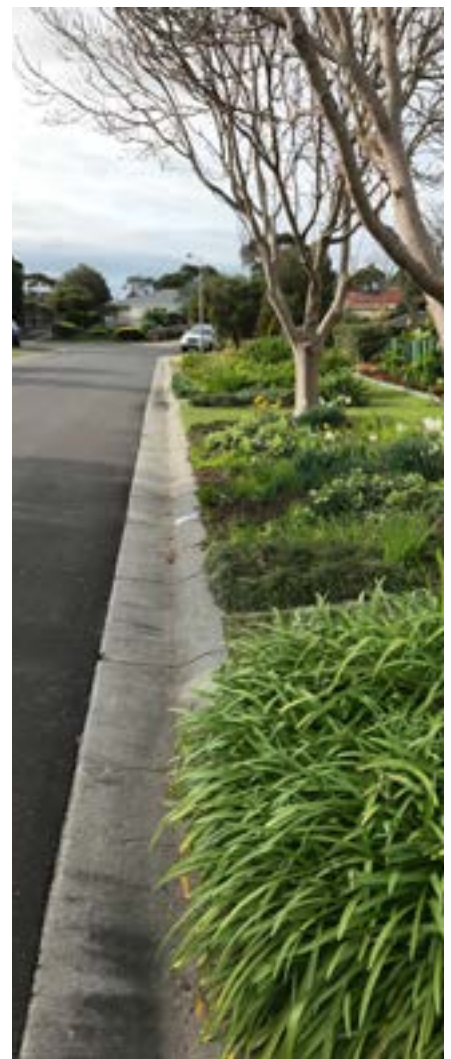
Planting must not increase the fuel load of your property or neighbouring properties in high fire risk areas.

Productive gardens

Edible and fruit bearing plants will be considered as long as they fit with the above requirements for approved plantings and the following considerations are noted:

- Council has no responsibility for illness or allergic reactions caused by ingestion or contact with the plants or produce
- other community members are free to harvest the produce
- plants are not to be sprayed with pesticides or weed killers
- property owners maintain the harvest to reduce produce drop, insect infestations and rotting items
- adjoining footpath and kerb must be kept clear of produce drop.

Information on plants indigenous to Cardinia Shire can be found at <https://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/indigenousplantguide>



Planted nature strip.

Permit process (cont.)

Figure 1. Indicative drawing of areas available for planting – flat view (not to scale)

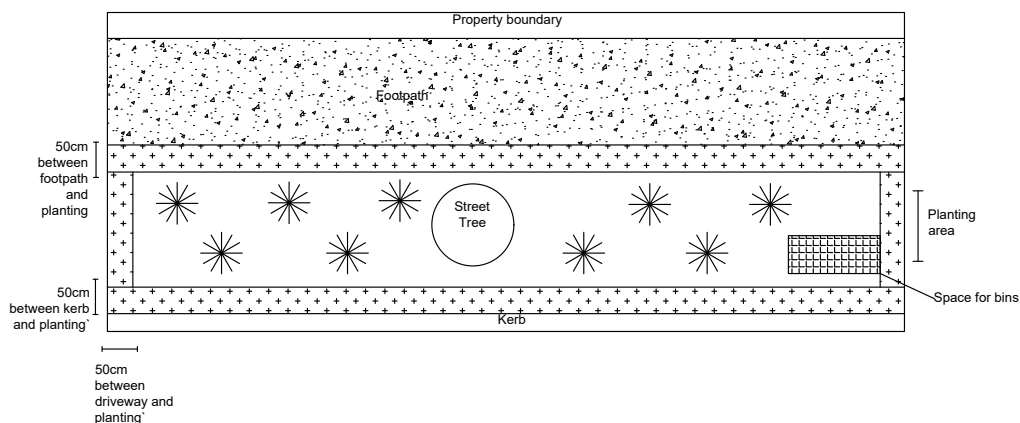
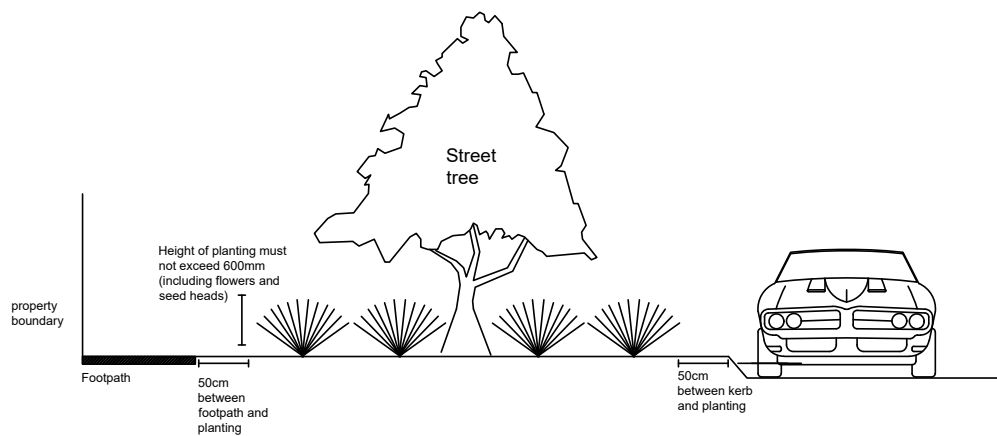


Figure 2. Indicative drawing of areas available for planting – side view (not to scale)



Permit process (cont.)

Synthetic turf

Installation of synthetic turf is discouraged due to adverse effects on the environment from increased run-off and build-up of sediment.

If synthetic turf is permitted, the following conditions must be adhered to:

- installation by a qualified and insured professional company
- properly secured with no loose edges
- maintained neat and weed free.

Applications for the installation of synthetic turf need to demonstrate why it has been selected over other Council preferred options.



Synthetic turf not installed correctly – lumps, dips, not flat.



Synthetic turf installed correctly.

Permit process (cont.)

What does Council NOT allow?

Infrastructure (including temporary structures)

Infrastructure includes the following types of elements (but is not limited to):

- stakes
- star pickets
- bollards
- edging
- planter boxes
- retaining walls
- garden ornaments
- statues
- irrigation
- lights
- electrical wiring
- sports equipment including basketball rings
- water features
- advertising signage without a valid permit
- fencing.

Hard landscaping items

Hard landscaping includes the following types of elements (but is not limited to):

- rocks
- timber
- loose stones
- pavers
- bricks
- blue metal
- river pebbles
- scoria
- concrete
- asphalt
- stepping stones
- bluestone
- railway sleepers
- netting
- straw
- synthetic plants.



Sporting equipment including temporary or fixed basketball rings are not permitted on nature strips (or roads) due to public safety issues.



Nature strip is overgrown with weeds, exceeds the 300mm limit for grass and is encroaching on the footpath.

Permit process (cont.)

Specific plants

Some specific plants will not be allowed, for example:

- weed species
- prickly
- poisonous
- suckering.

Parking

Requests for indented parking bays or additional crossovers are to be directed to Council's Engineering Unit on 1300 787 624 or mail@cardinia.vic.gov.au

Removal of street trees

Planting and maintenance of street trees takes precedence over all resident-initiated modifications and residents must not remove, prune or alter street trees.

Requests for street tree planting or maintenance are to be directed to Council's arborist on 1300 787 624 or mail@cardinia.vic.gov.au

Modifications

Modifications will not be allowed to the following:

- water sensitive urban design (WSUD) installations and/or drainage features such as raingardens
- remnant vegetation
- vegetation protected under a native vegetation protection plan
- vegetation protected under a heritage overlay.

A list of common weeds can be found at <https://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/weeds>



Infrastructure is not allowed on nature strips and includes edging, sleepers, stakes, irrigation and netting.



Drainage feature.

Undertaking works

Once you have permission from Council to undertake works, the following must be adhered to:

- work sites must be kept safe at all times via signage, exclusion zones and active surveillance as applicable
- traffic management plans must be implemented as required
- footpaths must be kept safe and accessible at all times
- landscape items (e.g. topsoil, mulch) must be stored and accessed from private property or driveway, not the nature strip or road reserve
- earth works must be done by hand, not machinery
- letter boxes must be on private property not on the nature strip, with suitable access to Australia Post delivery drivers as per Australia Post requirements
- any damage caused to infrastructure within or surrounding the nature strip must be rectified at owner's cost
- resident accepts OHS legislative liability for works undertaken by themselves
- if a contractor is engaged, the resident must ensure compliance with OHS Act and Regulations and have appropriate insurance cover, WorkCover and public liability insurance to cover the construction works.

Australia Post letter box requirements can be found at https://auspost.com.au/content/dam/auspost_corp/media/documents/letterbox-security-specification.pdf

Maintenance

Maintaining property nature strips, whether altered or not, is the responsibility of the resident. Council is only responsible for the maintenance of the street tree.

Maintenance includes, but is not limited to the following:

- nature strips must be kept level and 95 per cent weed free
- all rubbish and fire hazards must be removed
- no part of the nature strip is to encroach on the footpath, driveways, kerb or roadway
- if no footpath is installed, an unplanted space must be left adjacent to the property boundary for clear access for members of the public
- height of plantings, including flowers and seed heads, must remain under 600mm and grass height must be kept under 300mm
- areas subject to native vegetation protection overlays must be maintained as per their specific requirements, which may include limitations to mowing and removal of vegetation.



Undertaking works (cont.)

Ongoing requirements

If you wish to change your nature strip again in the future or reinstate to the original condition, Council must be notified and works approved prior to commencing.

Responsibility to maintain the nature strip transfers to the new owner when a property is sold.

Utility access

Utility companies have access rights to the road reserve and may be required to dig up the nature strip periodically for service inspection or renewal.

- utility companies are only required to reinstate grass, they are not required to reinstate any modifications approved by Council and installed by the resident
- Council is not responsible for replacing any landscaping as a result of utility works.



Non-compliance

- Requirements and penalties in regard to nature strips are enforced under Council’s Local Law 17. In summary these are: if nature strips (modified or otherwise) are not maintained in a responsible way or become unsightly the resident will be made aware and asked to maintain to an appropriate standard as outlined in these guidelines.
- Council has the right to remove any landscaping deemed inappropriate under these guidelines, at the owner’s cost.
- Safety issues including but not limited to tripping hazards, falling hazards, obstructions or other hazards may be removed from nature strips without consultation or warning and the cost of this charged to the resident.
- Council officers will use discretion but will seek compliance in regard to safety and may direct the reinstatement of the nature strip at any time at cost to the permit holder.

For details of Local Law 17, please visit: <https://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/locallaw17>

What if your nature strip is already changed?

If modifications have been approved by Council prior to these guidelines being implemented, they will be exempt from the requirements of the guidelines.

If the modifications comply with these guidelines, and were installed prior to the guidelines being implemented, the works will not require further approval.

If the modifications do not comply with these guidelines, then a permit will be required to redesign and alter the nature strip to align with the guidelines or reinstate to grass.



Applying for a permit

Pre-planning

If you are thinking about modifying your nature strip, you can streamline the permit process, by undertaking the following steps prior to submitting your application:

- check to ensure that what you want to do is consistent with Council's guidelines, as outlined in this document
- prepare a plan detailing your proposal
- consider and consult with your neighbours to gauge their support for your plan
- ensure you have a minimum of \$20 million public liability insurance that covers the exposure of the works to be performed
- ensure you maintain an ongoing public liability insurance policy for a minimum of \$20 million, for the period of time that the nature strip is modified from its original condition
- if you are renting or part of a body corporate, seek permission from the owner/landlord/body corporate
- complete a Dial Before You Dig search to make sure the works you are proposing will not interfere with existing services. Call 1100 or visit www.1100.com.au

How to apply

A nature strip modification permit application can be completed online. Go to https://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/nature_strips

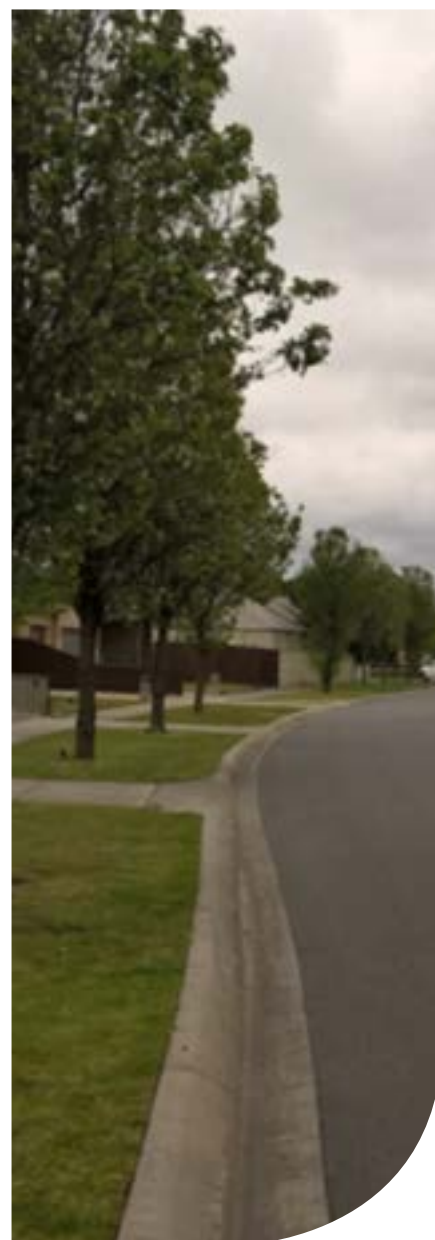
Follow the instructions and be prepared to attach the following:

- Certificate of Currency for public liability insurance for a minimum of \$20 million that:
 - provides cover for the works to be undertaken for the period of construction
 - covers the applicant/owner of the property for the Council-approved modifications to the nature strip on an ongoing basis
- detailed plans of works to be done
- contractor's details (if using), including:
 - company details and ABN
 - public liability insurance details
- traffic management plan if required
- permission from the owner/landlord if required.

Permit process

- Application
 - submitted online and acknowledged by Council within 7 days
- Approval
 - written approval from Council or a request for more information within 28 days
- Begin and complete works within 1 year of permit being issued
 - worksite must be kept safe at all times
 - footpath must be safe and accessible at all times
 - landscape items (e.g. topsoil, mulch) must be stored and accessed from within property or driveway, not nature strip or road
- All costs of modifications to nature strips and ongoing maintenance are borne solely by the resident.

For help with the application or if you have any questions, contact Council's Open Space Team on 1300 787 624.



Related legislation

- *Road Management Act 2004*
- Cardinia Shire Council Local Law 17





Cardinia Shire Council
Civic Centre
20 Siding Avenue, Officer

PO Box 7
Pakenham 3810 (DX 81006 Pakenham)

Phone: 1300 787 624
Email: mail@cardinia.vic.gov.au
Web: cardinia.vic.gov.au

National Relay Service (NRS)
TTY: 133 677 (ask for 1300 787 624)
Speak and Listen (speech-to-speech relay):
1300 555 727 (ask for 1300 787 624)

Translator Interpretation Service
131 450 (ask for 1300 787 624)

