



Draft Nature Strip Planting Policy

Policy number: TBC

Endorsed by:

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Policy owner: Manager
Recreation and
Open Space

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Introduction

Nature strips are the areas of public land within a road reserve that are located between the edge of the road or back of the kerb and the property boundary not occupied by the footpath and private road crossings. They are typically a strip of grass with a tree planted in it and provide valuable green spaces in urban areas.

Nature strips also accommodate underground services, provide a space for the collection of waste bins and need to be safe and accessible for road users and pedestrians at all times.

In accordance with the Road Management Act 2004 Council is the responsible road authority for many road reserves and is responsible for the management of the nature strips within those road reserves. The regular maintenance and upkeep of those naturestrips is undertaken by the resident living in the property that abuts each one as part of the presentation of their property. Street trees on nature strips are planted and maintained by Council.

The draft Nature Strip Planting Policy (Policy) provides a framework that balances support for residents to provide an alternative to a grass nature strip with the responsible management of any risk associated with works on public land.

The rationale underpinning this support is that:

- It provides residents with options about the types of plants they may wish to have on their nature strip particularly if they are unable to mow a grassed nature strip.
- There are a range of environmental and social benefits from having a planted nature strip.
- Roads and footpaths need to be safe and accessible for pedestrians and road users.

The Policy replaces Nature Strip Landscape Policy and Guidelines (2014).

Definitions

Term	Definition
Council	Maribyrnong City Council
Policy	Nature Strip Planting Policy
Guidelines	Nature Strip Planting Guidelines
Nature strip	The area within a road reserve between the residential property, the footpath, and the street kerb.
Nature strip planting	Planting and associated landscaping on a nature strip

Purpose

The draft Nature Strip Planting Policy provides a framework to support residents who wish to plan, plant and maintain an alternative to a grass nature strip adjacent to their residential property whilst ensuring roads and footpaths are safe and accessible for pedestrians and road users.

The draft Policy intends to achieve a balance between the benefits that well-maintained planted nature strips provide to the urban environment while managing any risks that could arise as a result of landscaping to minimise loss and damage.

Scope

The draft Policy applies to all planting and associated landscaping works undertaken by residents on nature strips adjacent to residential properties, where Council is the Responsible Road Authority.

The draft Policy does not apply to works on nature strips within road reserves where Council is not the Responsible Road Authority nor to works impacting upon nature strips undertaken by Local, State and Federal Governments, or utility authorities.

Background

This draft Policy replaces the Nature Strip Landscape Policy and Guidelines (2014). It considers the contribution nature strips make to biodiversity, greening and cooling the urban environment and as a place for growing edibles.

The draft Policy is accompanied by Nature Strip Planting Guidelines which supports residents to plant the nature strip in front of their residence with a range of ground cover plants, low growing shrubs, herbs and vegetables, subject to receiving a Nature Strip Landscape Permit.

The draft Policy intends to achieve a balance between the benefits that well-maintained nature strips provide to the urban environment with recognition that any risks that could arise as a result of landscaping need to be managed to minimise loss and damage.

Policy

Council recognises that nature strips play an important role in the amenity, environmental and social health of the neighbourhoods within Maribyrnong.

Council and its residents value the natural environment and nature strips are an important part of the open space network. Nature strips contribute to reducing climate change impacts, and to regenerate and protect water ways, habitats and biodiversity. Well maintained nature strips also add to the appearance and presentation of our neighbourhoods.

Council also has a responsibility to appropriately manage public land to minimise any risks to the general public who need to and are able to access these spaces. Having oversight of works on public land is part of that management responsibility.

The draft Nature Strip Planting Policy provides the framework for those residents who may prefer an alternative to a grassed nature strip, whilst ensuring the ongoing safety of the public is maintained.

The objectives of the draft Policy are to:

- Provide residents with suitable options for the type of plants they may wish to have on their nature strip as alternatives to a traditional grass nature strip.
- Achieve a range of environmental and social benefits including increased biodiversity, increased visual amenity, and reduced maintenance.
- Ensure that if nature strips are modified they are landscaped and maintained appropriately to provide for safe and unobstructed movement of vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists, the provision of telecommunications and utility services, and the collection of waste.

The principles that inform the draft Nature Strip Planting Policy are that:

Nature strips contribute to a healthy environment for people, plants and animals.

They do this by:

- absorbing rainwater and reducing stormwater runoff
- assisting in cooling the surrounding area
- contributing to the amenity of a street and softening the landscape
- enhancing biodiversity
- creating social connections amongst residents
- foster community pride and a sense of place
- providing some opportunities for food production (where appropriate).

Nature strips accommodate essential services for the community. They do this by:

- housing essential service infrastructure that requires easy access
- providing a space for bins on waste collection days.

Nature strips need to be safe and accessible spaces. They do this by:

- not causing obstructions for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians.

Policy Statement

Council recognises that nature strips contribute to a healthy environment for people, plants and animals and has a responsibility to manage the risks associated with landscaping works on public land.

Council supports residents who wish to plan, plant and maintain an alternative to a grass nature strip adjacent to their residential property in a way that is not detrimental to local amenity and ensures roads and footpaths remain safe and accessible.

Key Stakeholders

Key stakeholders have been identified and include:

- Community members including residents and property owners
- Councillors
- Chief Executive Officer
- Council Staff

Consultation

Development of the draft Policy

Consultation in the development of this draft Policy involved:

- Residents who had applied for a Nature Strip Landscape Permit since the inception of the permit process;
- Residents living in properties that had been issued with a Nature Strip Landscape Community members;
- Industry bodies including the Municipal Association of Victoria;
- Officers at other Council's that manage similar policies and/or guidelines regarding nature strips; and
- Maribyrnong City Council officers with responsibility for various aspects of the management of nature strips that might be impacted by this Policy.

Implementation of the Policy

The endorsement of and process for the implementation of this draft Policy will be communicated to all residents of Maribyrnong.

Updates or Changes to the Policy

Any updates or changes to the Policy will be subject to a review process including engagement consistent with Council's Community Engagement Policy.

Implementation and Monitoring

A resident wishing to undertake planting and any associated landscaping works on a nature strip adjacent to their residential property must obtain a permit to landscape a nature strip in accordance with General Purposes Local Law No.37 (2015) or as amended, prior to commencing works.

Applications for planting and landscaping of a nature strip will be considered in accordance with this Policy and the Nature Strip Planting Guidelines that support this Policy.

Where Council becomes aware of works on a nature strip that do not comply with the Guidelines, Council may:

1. Request the resident or property owner to alter the planting and landscaping works to comply with the Guidelines.
2. Undertake enforcement action in accordance with the General Purpose Local Law (2015) or as amended.
3. Remove the planting and landscaping works and return the area to grass.

<i>Policy Owner</i>	<i>Directorate</i>
<i>Manager Recreation and Open Space</i>	<i>Infrastructure Services</i>

Review of Policy

The Policy will be reviewed four years after it is approved by Council, or sooner if Council determines.

The timeframe for review of the Policy may be varied if legislation or other Council policies are changed or introduced with implications for this policy.

References

Victorian Government Legislation

Road Management Act 2004

Local Government Act 2020

Maribyrnong City Council

General Purposes Local Law 2015

Open Space Strategy 2014

Urban Forest Strategy

Climate Emergency Strategy

Nature Plan (under development)

Integrated Water Management Plan (under development)

Road Safety Strategy 2021

Revision Record

Date	Version	Revision Description
12/01/2024	1	Draft Policy
	2	Draft Policy Post ELT
	3	Draft Policy Post Councillor Strategic Briefing Session
	4	Adopted Policy