

Nature Strip Planting Guidelines

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Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement of the Traditional Custodians

Banyule City Council is proud to acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as traditional custodians of the land and we pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Elders, past, present and emerging, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the region's history.

Banyule Diversity Statement

Our community is made up of diverse cultures, beliefs, abilities, bodies, sexualities, ages and genders. Council is committed to access, equity, participation and rights for everyone; principles which empower, foster harmony and increase the wellbeing of an inclusive community.

Community and Key Stakeholders

Banyule City Council extends a heartfelt thanks to the individuals who participated in the Urban Forest Community Forum March 2025 to help shape these draft guidelines. Banyule City Council is made stronger by the collective expertise, ideas, enthusiasm and passion of the many people, organisations and businesses committed to an inclusive, healthy and sustainable community.

Introduction

Nature strips help shape our streets by providing space for services like power and water. They also improve our urban forest by allowing street trees and other plants to grow. Banyule knows that safe and accessible nature strips are important.

This document offers guidelines for residents who want to change nature strips along Council-managed public roads. Following these guidelines is key to keeping our community safe and accessible.

Please note that these guidelines do not apply to median strips, laneways, shopping strips, or private property.

Definition

Nature strips are the areas of public land between a private property boundary and the road kerb or gutter. They are part of the road reserve, and they allow space for essential above and below ground services including:

- sewerage, drainage, electricity and internet
- footpaths for pedestrians
- street trees and water sensitive urban design (WSUD)
- waste collection services
- for people to get in and out of vehicles
- street lighting, bus stops, bus shelters or seats

Council and service providers may need access to these services.

Benefits of nature strips

Nature strips add character to our streets, especially with street trees and other plants.

Vegetation on nature strips helps prevent stormwater runoff and helps filter water before it enters drains and waterways.

Well-kept nature strips offer a wonderful opportunity to make public spaces more biodiverse, offering habitat for pollinators and helping keep streets cooler during hot days.

Examples of Nature Strip Types

Typical nature strip

Typical nature strips have a paved footpath along the property boundary and a lawn area between the footpath and the road kerb.

The lawn area can be narrow or wide.



Double nature strip

Some areas have wide nature strips with lawns on both sides of a footpath.

These strips may be able to support taller plants in the grass area next to the property.

Residents may also request more street trees in these wide strips.

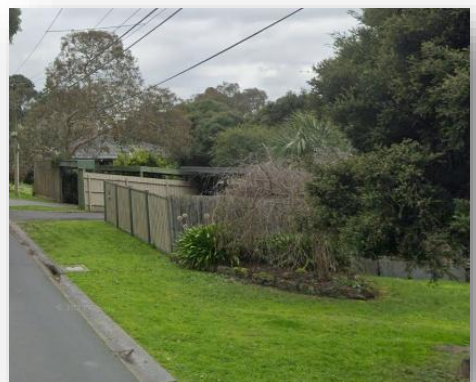


No footpath on nature strip

Sometimes, a nature strip does not have a footpath.

In these cases, the planting area must begin at least 1.5 metres away from the property boundary.

Footpaths may be added in the future.



Responsibilities

Banyule Council:

- Council plants and cares for street trees on nature strips. Residents cannot plant, trim, or remove these trees. Please see [Tree Management on Our Land](#) for more details or to request a street tree.
- Under Banyule Local Community Law 2025, Council may ask residents to fix nature strips that do not follow these guidelines or are unsafe.
- Council may remove any item on the nature strip that poses an immediate public risk, such as a trip hazard or blockage, without warning.
- Council may add features like bus stops, drainage pits, and seating to improve the street and may need to remove vegetation or alter the nature strip. Residents will be notified before work starts. After the work is completed, the nature strips will be restored with topsoil and lawn seed; Council is not responsible for restoring other plantings on the nature strip.

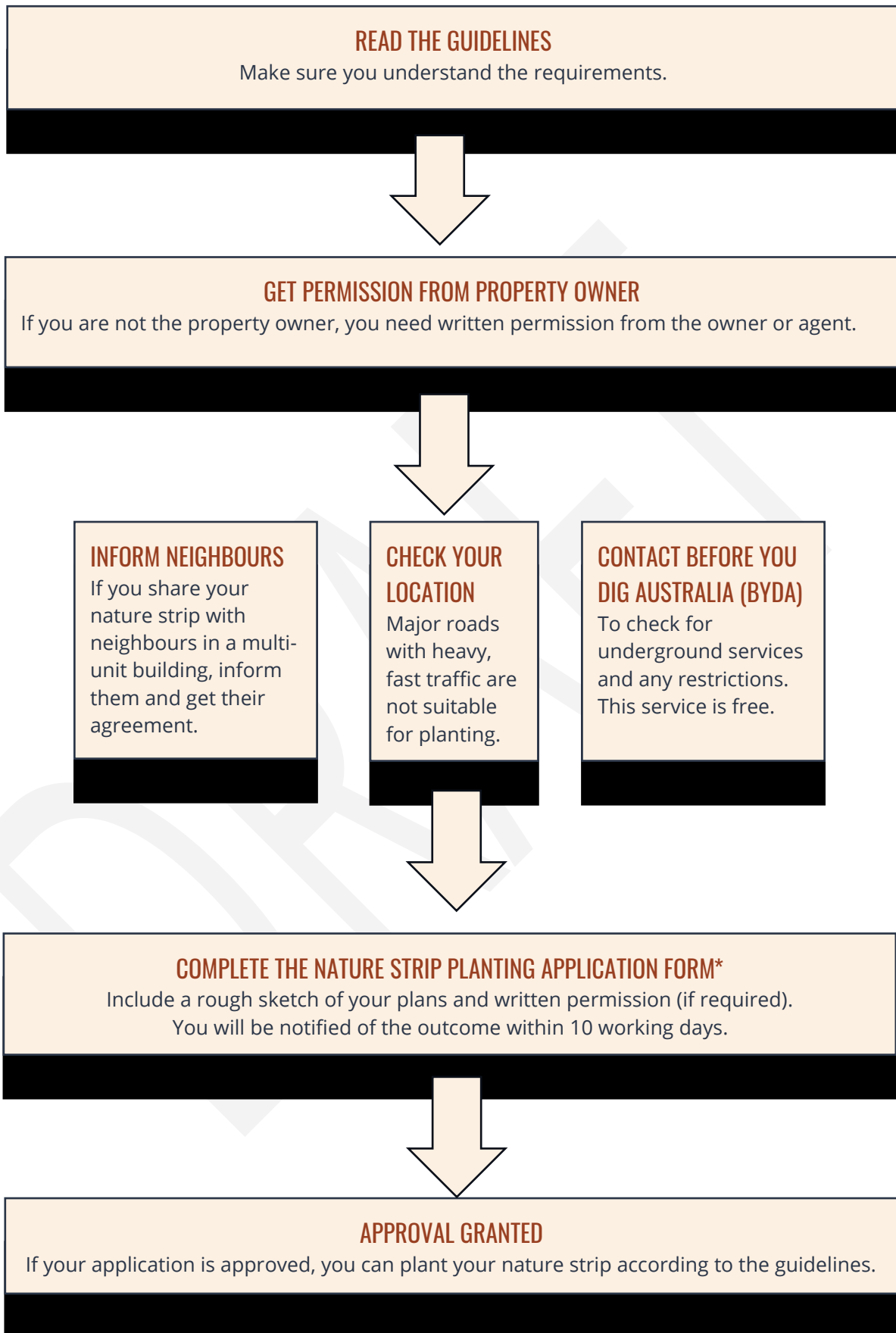
Utility and Public Transport Providers:

- Providers such as Melbourne Water, VicRoads, electricity and telecommunications, may need access to the nature strip to repair or replace services.
- They may remove vegetation or change the nature strip during their work. When finished, they must restore the area with topsoil and lawn seed. They are not responsible for restoring other plantings on nature strips.

Residents:

- Residents must keep the nature strip in front of their property safe, neat, and tidy. Pedestrians need to have full access to the footpath.
- Residents are responsible for obtaining Council approval to plant on their nature strips by following the process described in this document.
- If utility companies or Council remove plants for infrastructure work, they will restore the nature strip to topsoil and lawn seed once the work is completed. It will be the responsibility of the resident to restore other plantings, if they wish to.

Before you plant your nature strip



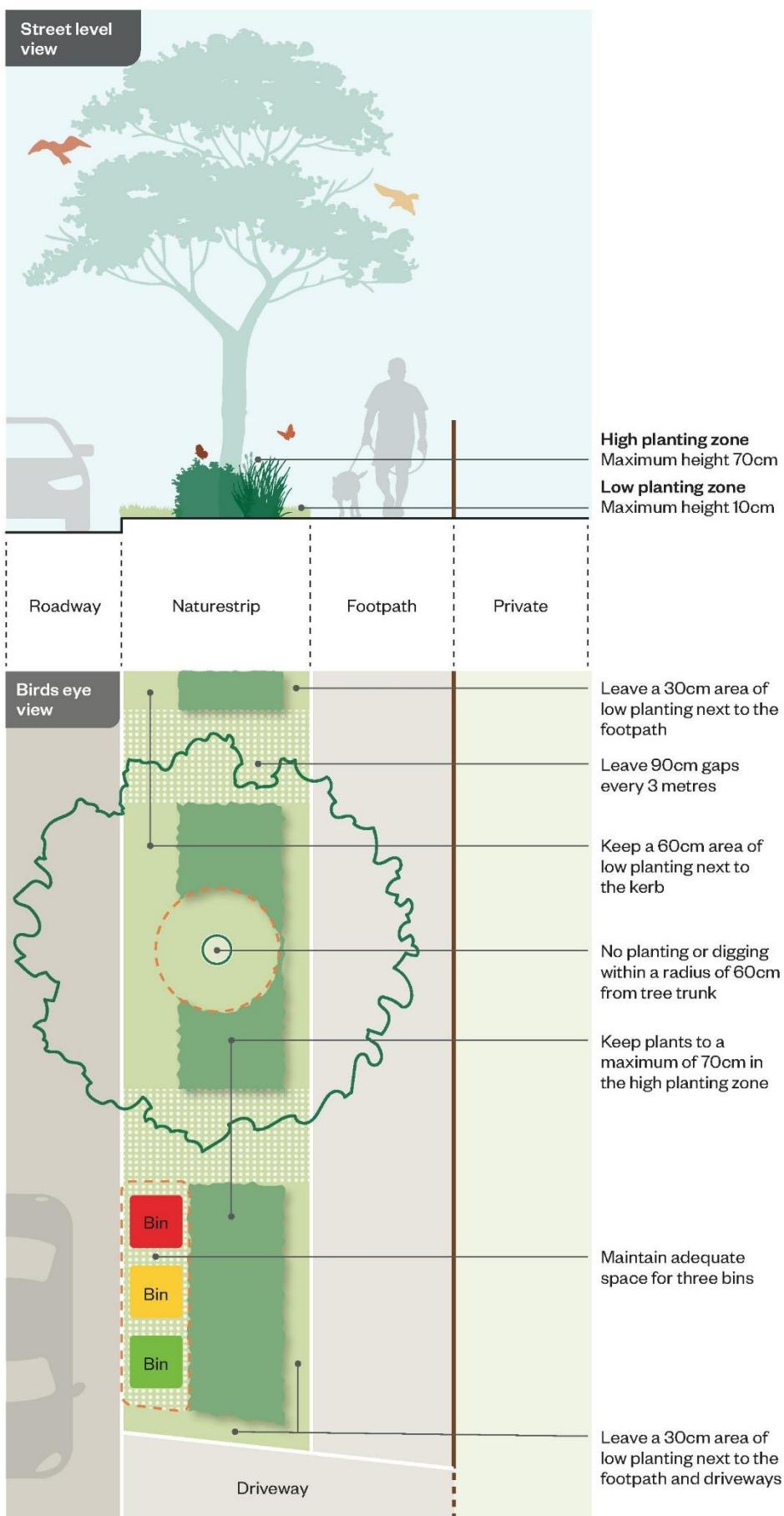
(*NOTE: Nature Strip Application Form will be available when the guidelines are published).

Key Guidelines

- Plants can grow up to **70cm** tall in **High Planting Zones**. On corners and near roundabouts, the maximum height is **30cm**.
- Plants in **Low Planting Zones** must be **10cm** or shorter.
- Leave a **60cm** area of **low planting** next to the kerb.
- Leave a **30cm** area of **low planting** next to **footpaths** and **driveways**.
- Leave a **60cm “no dig”** area around **street trees**.
- Make sure there’s a clear **space for waste collection**.
- Leave **regular gaps** in high planting zones. For example, on a 10-metre nature strip, leave 90cm gaps of clear space or low plants every 3 metres or so.
- Only include items allowed on nature strips.
- Do not plant weed species, spiky or prickly plants.

Key Guidelines

Draft March 2025



High Planting Zone

Maximum height of 70cm.
Maximum height is 30cm for corners properties.

Plant native grasses, wildflowers, groundcovers and small shrubs.

Low Planting Zone

Maximum height of 10cm.
Plant hardy groundcovers or lawn.

Access Zone

Clear areas for access.
Compacted granitic sand, soil and mulch can be used.
Lawn and hardy groundcovers up to 10cm tall can also be planted.

Key Guidelines – Further Information

Footpath and Kerb

- Nature strip planting can block safe access from the road to the footpath and get in the way of car doors.
- Plants growing over kerbs and loose mulch can affect stormwater flow and drainage.
- If there's no footpath, leave a 150cm wide space for pedestrians. This space can be soil, lawn, or compacted granitic sand.

Plant Height

- Plant height affects visibility, which is essential for safety. Clear views help pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers see other approaching vehicles, people, and hazards, especially near driveways, intersections, and crossings.
- In High Planting Zones, plants can grow up to 70cm tall. However, choosing plants that grow around 50cm is recommended. The 70cm limit allows for taller seed heads of some native grasses and wildflowers, which helps support biodiversity.

Street Trees

- Protecting tree roots is essential for tree health. Digging around tree trunks can damage shallow roots, making trees more vulnerable to disease, pests, and instability.
- Leave a 60cm “No Dig Zone” around each tree trunk to protect its roots. This area should remain untouched and unplanted.

Length of High Planting Zone

- Creating gaps in planting helps people safely get from cars to the footpath. For every 3 metres of planting, leave at least a 90cm wide gap for pedestrian access.
- These gaps make it safer for people using mobility aids, strollers, or walking pets by giving them a clear path without stepping onto the road.

Waste Collection and Street Infrastructure

- Leave enough space for the safe collection of up to three 240L bins. Bins cannot be placed in the driveway.
- Place bins on flat areas of lawn, soil, or compacted granitic sand to prevent them from toppling.
- Multi-unit dwellings may need more space for waste collection.
- There are different bin placement requirements if you live in a Court. See [Bins and recycling information | Banyule Council](#)

Other Access Zones for Services and Infrastructure

Other infrastructure on your nature strip may need easy access.

Clearance needs depend on the object. See the table below for details.

Asset Type	Clearance needed
Bike racks Bollards Posts (e.g. School Crossing Post) Signage	50cm (all around)
Bike Repair Station Bins (fixed) Streetlights Drainage pits Benches Parking meters Fire Hydrant Australia Post Box	1 metre (all around)
Disabled parking spot	1.5 metres (next to kerb)
Bus stops	10 metres (from flag post)
Intersections	10 metres (all around)

Materials

Mulch

- Use organic mulch like woodchips or bark. Do not use dyed mulch.
- Avoid fine mulch, as it can easily wash away and spread onto the footpath.
- Recommended depth of mulch is 75mm to allow enough rainfall to reach the soil while reducing evaporation and erosion.

Compacted Granitic Sand

- Compacted Granitic Sand can be used in Access Zones, for example for bin placement or pedestrian paths.
- Council suggests using local materials and limiting granitic sand to a maximum of one-third of the nature strip.
- Fine Granitic Sand is recommended.

Herbicides and other chemicals

- To protect local biodiversity and keep waterways healthy, limit or avoid the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides.

Choosing Plants

Indigenous and native plants are recommended for nature strips because they help preserve biodiversity by supporting local insects and pollinators.

They are also well-suited to the local climate and soil conditions.

Indigenous plants are native to a specific local area, like Banyule, and may also grow in nearby regions.

Native plants occur naturally in a larger region, such as all of Australia.

Exotic plants are not native to the area and come from other regions or countries.

Weeds are plants that spread quickly and harm local ecosystems. Most weeds are exotic, but some native plants can also become invasive.

Things to consider when choosing plants for your nature strip

- **Plant growth habit:** Will the plant grow taller than 70cm or spread too fast? Some plants may need extra care to stay within the guidelines.
- **Avoid prickly or spiky plants:** Non-woody plants are better for nature strips.
- **Use recommended plants:** We suggest plants from our [recommended plant list](#)*.
- **Indigenous plants near waterways:** If your nature strip is within 200 metres of a waterway or biodiversity corridor, only use indigenous plants from the recommended list.
- **Weed status:** [Check the Weeds List](#)* to make sure the plant is not an environmental weed.
- **Avoid edible plants:** Edible plants are not recommended due to possible soil contamination.
- **Streetscape theme:** Does your plant choice match the character of the neighbourhood? Find out more about [neighbourhood character](#).
- **Consult local nurseries:** For more details on local plant species, reach out to local indigenous nurseries.

(*NOTE: Recommended Plant List and Weeds List will be available when the guidelines are published)

What is Not Permitted?

Items on nature strip

Items not allowed on the nature strip include, but are not limited to:

- Synthetic grass
- Environmental weeds
- Prickly, spiky, or poisonous plants
- Hard landscaping items like stakes, retaining walls, raised edging,
- Planter boxes and garden beds
- Bollards, sculptures, or ornaments
- Rocks, logs, or timber
- Fruit or vegetable crops
- Scoria, pebbles or loose stones
- Synthetic weed mats (e.g., plastic sheeting under mulch)
- Irrigation systems and lighting.

Alterations

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

Altering ground levels or drainage, (e.g., with mounded soil) is not permitted.

Parking on nature strips

Parking on nature strips can damage public infrastructure, obstruct emergency services, and pose safety risks for pedestrians.

In Victoria, parking on nature strips is generally prohibited under the Road Safety Road Rules 2017, and signage is not required to prohibit parking on the nature strip.

Approval and Compliance

- To plant on your nature strip, **you must seek approval from Council** (follow the steps listed on Page 7). Approval is granted if your location is suitable, and your application meets the guidelines.
- If your application is approved, you will not need a permit if you **follow these guidelines**.
- If your application is not approved and you disagree with Council's decision, you can **contact us to request a review** and discuss your application further.
- Before planting, contact **Before You Dig Australia** for a free report to check underground services.
- Only **use hand tools**, and limit digging to a **depth of 30cm**.
- Do not use herbicides or chemicals to remove the lawn.
- Residents are responsible for maintaining nature strips and need to ensure **plants stay within the guidelines** and that the footpath and roadway remain clear.
- Local Law 2025 enforces these guidelines.

When is a permit required?

- If you plan to use an excavator or any mechanical tools to remove lawn on your nature strip, you must apply for a 'Working on the road reserve' permit.
- If your nature strip is within 200m of a named waterway or is in a Registered Aboriginal Site, you may need to apply for an additional permit.
- If your nature strip was planted before these guidelines were adopted, you may need to make changes to follow the new guidelines. You may also need to request an exemption permit from Council.

Contact Us

For further information or support regarding nature strip modifications, please contact the **Parks & Natural Environment Department on (03) 9490 4441**.