

Hepburn

SHIRE COUNCIL



Planting on nature strip

Guidelines

2021/2022



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Hepburn Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work. On these lands, Djaara have performed age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. We recognise their resilience through dispossession and it is a testament to their continuing culture and tradition, which is strong and thriving.

We also acknowledge the neighbouring Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri to our South East and the Wadawurrung to our South West and pay our respect to all Aboriginal peoples, their culture, and lore. We acknowledge their living culture and the unique role they play in the life of this region.



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Introduction

Planting on nature strips can provide a range of benefits to you and your local area. Some of these benefits include:

- getting active outdoors by gardening;
- learning about plants and the environment and interacting with nature;
- providing a free food source;
- connecting with people in your neighbourhood;
- providing habitat for animals and strengthening local ecosystems; and even
- contributing to greening the Shire and combating climate change.

These guidelines have been developed to support people in Hepburn Shire who are interested in planting on their nature strip. The guidelines are designed to help people achieve successful and safe nature strip plantings that are in line with relevant legislation.

These guidelines have been developed by a community reference group in consultation with Council and endorsed by Council on (date).

Nature strip or verge?

Sometimes nature strips are called verges. Both terms are correct but for the purpose of this document we will use the term nature strip.

Do I need to get approval to plant on my nature strip?

In most cases, if you follow these guidelines, you will not need to get approval from Council. However, there may be some situations where you do need to get Council permission. These situations mostly apply to those with smaller nature strips.

More information about what you can do without permission and when you need permission can be found in the 'What you can plant on your nature strip' section. If a permit is needed, there is no cost – permits are free.

These guidelines are not retrospective. There are many wonderful nature strip gardens across the Shire. These guidelines only apply to new nature strip gardens and if existing nature strip gardens are upgraded, changed or if there are safety concerns.

Send us information about your nature strip garden via a self-declaration form

If you don't need a permit, we would still like to know about your nature strip garden.

At the end of these guidelines there is a helpful checklist and self-declaration form.

We encourage you to fill in the form, sign it and then send it to us via email at Shire@hepburn.vic.gov.au or by posting it to PO Box 21, Daylesford VIC 3460.

The self-declaration form lets us know that you have planned your nature strip garden taking into account the safety of the community and the environment. This information also helps us to better understand how popular this activity is in the Shire and informs how we can better support the community with this activity in the future.



All about nature strips

What is a nature strip?

A nature strip is public land usually between the road and your property. It includes the strips of land on the sides or corners of properties and in some instances this space may also include a footpath. This land is set aside for a variety of reasons including essential services above and below the ground like telephone, gas, water, sewage and electricity.

This land also provides safe and direct access for:

- people like posties and service maintenance staff;
- bins – and a flat surface to place them out for collection; and
- entry and exit of vehicles and for passengers.

Nature strips provide an open space that allows clear viewing lines for pedestrians, vehicle traffic and cyclists at intersections, driveways and curves.

Council	Council is responsible for the maintenance and planting of street trees.
Resident	Residents are responsible for maintaining their nature strips this includes mowing. If a resident chooses to plant out their nature strip, the maintenance of this space is their responsibility as well as ensuring it is safe for all community members including pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and neighbours.
New homeowner	If you purchase a home with a planted-out nature strip, you are responsible for maintaining that nature strip or returning it to its original state.
Community	Community are encouraged to enjoy the green spaces in the Shire including nature strips, but it is also important that people raise issues with Council when needed, particularly if there is an impact to safety or the health of the environment.

Residential nature strips and rural nature strips

Hepburn Shire has different types of nature strips depending on where they are located. For example, nature strips in more rural areas are usually larger and, in most cases, have no footpath; and nature strips in more residential areas are smaller and are accessed by more people walking to shops, schools and services etc.

For this reason, there are some small differences in the guidelines for residential nature strips compared to rural nature strips. If you are not sure which category your house fits into contact Council via email at Shire@hepburn.vic.gov.au, by phone (03) 5348 2306 or see the appendix at the end of these guidelines.

Requirements for your nature strip garden

What you can plant on your nature strip

The below provides a quick snapshot of what can be planted or included on a nature strip without a permit or with Council permission. Please see the next section for more details about planting heights and setbacks to ensure your nature strip remains safe.

What you can include on your nature strip	Residential	Rural
Without a permit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plants up to 1.2 metre high including edible plants Organic mulch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plants including edible plants Organic mulch Small to medium trees/ fruit trees
With a permit (Permits are free)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raised garden beds Planter boxes (removable) Small to medium trees/ fruit trees Hardscapes (excluding the driveway) like rocks, boulders, benches, sculptures, seating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raised garden beds Planter boxes (removable) Hardscapes (excluding the driveway) like rocks, boulders, benches, sculptures, seating

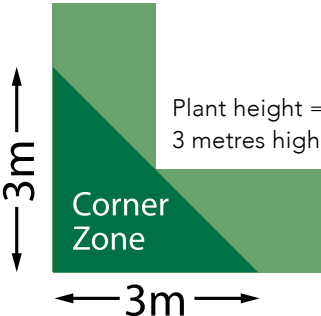


What is not permitted on your nature strip?

The below items are not permitted on your nature strip:

- Synthetic grass/ turf
- Noxious weeds and highly invasive species (<https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/biosecurity/protecting-victoria/legislation-policy-and-permits/consolidated-lists-of-declared-noxious-weeds-and-pest-animals>)
- Plants that pose a credible risk of poisoning, injury, or causing allergic reaction in passers-by, including children and animals
- Permanent structures or retaining walls
- Non permeable surfaces where water cannot penetrate the ground like concrete, pavers (excluding the driveway and non-porous weed mat.
- Garden edging
- Any material that is dangerous, loose, slippery, sharp or blocks sight-lines
- Any of the following problem plants -
Gazania rigens and G. linearis- Gazania
 - ▶ Vinca major- Periwinkle
 - ▶ Billardiera fusiformis and Billardiera heterophylla (formerly Sollya heterophylla) – WA Bluebell Creeper
 - ▶ Iris foetidissima Stinking Iris
 - ▶ Ligustrum vulgare– European Privet
 - ▶ Erica lusitanica Spanish Heath
 - ▶ Prunus lusitanica – Portuguese Laurel
 - ▶ Prunus laurocerasus – Cherry Laurel
 - ▶ Ilex europaeus – Holly
 - ▶ Acacia pravissima – Ovens Wattle

Nature strip planting requirements

Topic	Requirements
Plant heights and setbacks	<p>It is important that your nature strip garden does not impact on lines of sight for pedestrian, cyclists and motorists including vehicles entering and existing your property.</p> <p>Residential</p> <p>Make sure you choose plants that don't grow higher than 1.2 metres or prune your plants to this height or below.</p> <p>For properties on an intersection or corner, plants on the nature strip can only be grown to 0.3 metres high in the 'corner zone' - which is 3 metres from the corner in both directions.</p> <p>Rural</p> <p>For larger rural nature strips there is no specific height limit for plants, but it is important that plants are set back from the road (at least 3 metres), and from pathways and driveways so they do not impact sight lines.</p> 
Raised garden beds and planter boxes	<p>For raised garden beds and planter boxes you will need to work with us to make sure your plans are safe for others. <i>You will need to get a permit, which is free.</i></p> <p>For smaller / residential nature strips the aim is to make sure your raised garden bed/ planter box (including plants):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not exceed 1.2 metres (from ground) to maintain sight lines; and • is set back 0.6 metres from the footpaths, common driveways, street trees and any other infrastructure. <p>Rural</p> <p>For larger nature strips, planter boxes or raised gardens must be set back at least 3 metres from the road, and ideally placed towards your property fence/ boundary, making sure you have good clearance from pedestrian pathways, driveways, where you park your car, street trees and any other infrastructure.</p>
Small to medium trees/ fruit trees	<p>Rural</p> <p>Small the medium sized trees should be placed at least 3 metres from the road and ideally closer to your property fence/ boundary to maintain safe sightlines for motorists and people entering and existing your property.</p> <p>Make sure there is a clearance of 1 metre to any large street tree or other infrastructure.</p> <p>Vegetables, fruits and nuts must be harvested regularly and collected off the ground to prevent issues associated with decomposing vegetation and trip hazards.</p>

Topic	Requirements
Small to medium trees/ fruit trees (cont.)	<p>Residential</p> <p>For residential nature strips you will need to work with us to make sure your plans are safe for others. <i>You will need to get a permit, which is free.</i></p> <p>For smaller / residential nature strips the aim is to make sure trees do not impact on the sight lines of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists, do not damage larger street trees or other infrastructure and fit in with the character of the street / neighbourhood.</p>
Mulch	<p>If you plan to use mulch, we recommended organic mulches. Mulch needs to be kept on the nature strip and not spill onto the pedestrian walkways/ footpath or driveways.</p>
Hardscapes – seating, benches, sculptures, rocks, boulders	<p>Anyone who wants to include hardscapes on their nature strip will need to work with us to ensure their plans take into account the safety of the community. <i>You will need to get a permit, which is free.</i></p> <p>The aim is to ensure any hardscapes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • constructed using durable material; • are securely installed; • do not impact the health of any street trees; and • don't create any trip or safety hazards for the community.
Footpath clearance	<p>It is important that people can safely walk along the footpath or street without being obstructed or tripping on hazards. Make sure you keep the footpath clear or if there is no footpath, leave a clear level grass strip of 1.5 metres wide.</p> <p>You also need to keep these spaces clear of any overhanging branches at head height or below.</p>
Car door clearance	<p>Make sure you leave a clearance of at least 0.6 metres from the road so people can open car doors when parking alongside your nature strip.</p>
Clearance for parking your car	<p>On rural nature strips leave a clearance of 2.4m for parking your car from the road.</p>
Clearance for the postie and your bins	<p>Leave enough space for the postie to access your letterbox – usually 1 metre clearance around the letterbox is enough.</p> <p>Make sure you leave space for bins and keep this space free from obstructions including overhead trees.</p>

Important things to consider

Essential services

DIAL BEFORE YOU DIG

Prior to commencing any work on your nature strip, it is advised to contact 'Dial Before You Dig' to find out what, if any services, including phone, water, power, gas etc are located within the space and to ensure that the depth of those services is sufficient to carry out your plans.

Any works or plantings that you carry out on the nature strip that cause damage or disruption to those services, will need to be reinstated in full at your cost. Remember to always leave a good clearance and access around power poles and service pits that are located within your nature strip.

REINSTATING YOUR NATURE STRIP GARDEN

From time to time, essential services may need to undertake works and maintenance on their infrastructure which may damage or disturb your nature strip garden. You need to be aware that if this happens you are responsible for reinstating your nature strip garden (at your cost). Whilst Council endeavours to contact property owners of any essential works on Council infrastructure, other service authorities may or may not contact you prior to their works.

Council may also require nature strips to be removed or altered to enable future potential footpaths to be constructed or other works to be undertaken.

Edible plants

SOIL CONTAMINATION

There may be an increased risk of soil contamination in nature strip soils, this is mainly because of cars and other vehicles being parked on or next to the nature strip over many years. For this reason, you should have your soil tested for heavy metals or chemical residue. As a tip, currently Macquarie University's Science Faculty provide a simple, low-cost soil testing service. Check their website for details <https://research.science.mq.edu.au/vegesafe/>

PEOPLE AND ANIMALS USE THE NATURE STRIP

Given that nature strips are public land, people can and will help themselves to fruit, herbs and veggies that you have grown. Also remember that animals, both domestic and wild, may also use your nature strip and be interested in the produce you grow. Make sure you always wash your produce before you eat it!

TALK TO YOUR NEIGHBOURS

It is always a good idea to talk with your neighbours and fill them in on your plans for a nature strip garden. Understand their concerns, provide them with a copy of these guidelines if needed and if possible, adjust your plans before you commence your garden. You might even be able to create a small street community garden.

Preferred species

On our website www.hepburn.vic.gov.au we have listed a range of preferred plant species to consider for your nature strip garden. Our preferred species include natives and plants that:

- are beneficial for insects, bees and birds;
- low growing;
- avoid root systems that could damage street trees, infrastructure and footpaths;
- have a cooling effect to help reduce fire risk; and
- are sympathetic to the historical character of the area.

Design tips

- Measure your nature strip and draw up a plan.
- Calculate the area and how many plants you need.
- Think about the style of garden you want and choose plants accordingly (from the preferred species list).
- If possible, avoid planting thorny species or make sure you keep them well away from driveways, roads, footpaths and walkways.
- Group plants with the same water, fertiliser, mulch and sun requirements.
- Think about a waterwise garden, heavily mulched so it requires no or low watering.
- Check the health of your soil to assess if it will need loosening or compost.
- Think about selecting plants that won't grow too high to avoid impacting sight lines, walkways and even overhead cables.

Note; Some rural verges contain remnant native vegetation that may be subject to native vegetation regulations. Seek advice from council if you suspect this is the case. These areas may be a great opportunity for residents to protect and enhance our bushland through 'ecological restoration'.

The regulatory stuff

These guidelines have been written to support clause 2.21 of our Local Law No2, which states: A person must not, without a permit, plant any trees or other vegetation on any part of a road other than in compliance with **Council's Planting Vegetation on Roads Policy** being a document incorporated by reference into this Local Law.

Residents are reminded that planting is at their own risk. You must consider the impacts of

your nature strip garden on the community, animals and the environment.

Where planted nature strips are not maintained or are planted outside of these guidelines, we may provide notice for you to rectify any issues, or we may remove the plantings if deemed necessary.

Local groups who can provide advice & support

- Daylesford and District Horticultural Society
www.facebook.com/DaylesfordHortiClub/
- Daylesford Community Food Gardens
www.facebook.com/daylesfordcommunityfoodgardens/
- Your local Landcare groups
- Friends of Wombat Hill

Let's get going!

CHECKLIST AND SELF-DECLARATION

We encourage you to use the checklist on the next page when preparing your nature strip garden plans. The checklist is also a self-declaration form that you can tick, sign and then send into Council if you want (whether you need a permit or not).

Send the form to Shire@hepburn.vic.gov.au or by post to PO Box 21 Daylesford 3460.

APPLYING FOR A PERMIT

To apply for a permit visit hepburn.vic.gov.au/naturestrips and fill in the online form or you can print the form from our website and then send it to PO Box 21 Daylesford 3460.

If you need help, please contact us via email at Shire@hepburn.vic.gov.au or phone (03) 5348 2306.

With your application you will need to submit or include a drawing of your nature strip garden plans.

Applications will be assessed based on use, location, size of the nature strip, access to services, safety and sight lines.

The application process/ permits are FREE.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information visit:

www.hepburn.vic.gov.au or contact us via email at: Shire@hepburn.vic.gov.au or by phone on (03) 5348 2306.

Checklist & self-declaration form

Name: _____

Address: _____ Town/Suburb: _____

Email: _____ Telephone: _____

I/We have a: (tick which nature strip applies to you) Residential Nature Strip: ☐ Rural nature Strip: ☐

Nature Strip Garden Checklist	✓	Comments
I have talked to my neighbours about my plans and considered their feedback		
I have contacted 'Dial Before You Dig'		
My nature strip garden plans are in line with my property boundary, and do not encroach onto my neighbour's land		
I have organised soil testing as my nature strip garden will include edible plants		
I have ensured my nature strip garden will not impact the footpath, or if no footpath the 1.5 metre grassed accessway. These spaces will be kept clear and free from hazards.		
My nature strip garden has been designed to ensure car doors can open and people can get out of cars safely (with a clearance of 0.6 metres)		
My nature strip garden will be maintained to specified heights (where appropriate) and not impact sight lines for pedestrian, cyclists and motorists using the road or entering and exiting my driveway		
My nature strip garden plans will leave clear access for the postie and my bins		
My nature strip garden plans will leave clear access around service pits, power poles and street trees		
My nature strip garden will not include any items listed as 'not permitted' in these guidelines		
I will maintain my nature strip garden to ensure it is safe and tidy		
I understand that my nature strip garden could be impacted by future infrastructure works and it will be my responsible and cost to reinstate it		

I am also applying for a permit: Yes ☐ No ☐

Signature: _____

Date: _____



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