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## Whitehorse City Council Nature Strip Planting Guidelines

In Whitehorse, most nature strips are mown grass, usually containing one or more street tree in front of each house. Generally, the resident maintains the lawn of the nature strip while Council maintains the street trees. However, if you would like to add other plants to your nature strip, you may seek approval by following these guidelines and applying for a Nature Strip Planting Permit. There are a number of reasons why you may wish to do this to:

- Replace grass that is failing or performing poorly with other types of vegetation.
- Beautify and bring visual interest to the nature strip.
- Avoid the maintenance of regular mowing.
- Support local biodiversity by planting indigenous or native plants.
- Avoid or minimise the need for watering, herbicide or pesticide use.

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*The nature strip is the public land, often found between the paved footpath and the road kerb.*

*Generally, the resident in the adjacent property maintains the nature strip by regular, mowing, weeding and the picking up of litter.*

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The nature strip is a public space and is used for different reasons. Any changes must be approved and should be considerate of your neighbours and the wider community. Council need to ensure that:

- ✓ The space is safe,
- ✓ The requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act are met
- ✓ Sight lines for traffic and pedestrians are maintained
- ✓ Parked cars have space for doors to be opened
- ✓ There is access to fire hydrants and service pits
- ✓ Cars exiting driveways have a clear line of sight
- ✓ Existing infrastructure is accessible; and that
- ✓ There is space for rubbish bins for kerbside collection.

These guidelines will help you design your planting to take into account these kinds of considerations.

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## Application process

All applications must be submitted via the online portal.

Go online to access the guidelines & online application form at:

<https://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/waste-environment/trees-and-gardens/naturestrips/naturestrip-planting>

Council will then assess your application and notify you if it has been approved. Your application must be approved before works may commence.

## Terms and Conditions

When you submit your application, you will need to confirm that you agree to these Terms and Conditions:

### Responsibility

- Residents may only seek a permit for and plant on the nature strip that is adjacent to their property.
- The resident must maintain the area to an acceptable standard determined by Council at all times.

### Design and plant selection

- Plantings must be maintained under 0.5m in height at all times.
- Existing infrastructure (for example fire hydrants, public seating, signage, service pits and street trees) must not be impacted by the plantings. Plants must remain 0.5m clear of any infrastructure.
- Plants must be a minimum 0.5m from the kerb, driveways and footpaths to enable clear access.
- Environmental or noxious weeds must not be introduced to the nature strip. For information on Environmental/Noxious weeds please visit [Noxious Weeds of Whitehorse | Whitehorse City Council](#)
- Space for the placement of waste and recycling bins for kerbside pickup must be provided.
- Plantings must be spaced to enable pedestrian access to the footpath for long fronted properties exceeding 15 metres of nature-strip length.
- If mulch is required it must be organic such as chipped wood or bark (no stones or pebbles).
- No logs, pebbles, pavers, stakes, sleepers, rocks or similar should be used.
- Planting permits on major arterial roads or adjacent to roundabouts will not be issued.

### Other

- Accessibility to essential services and infrastructure placed in or underground must be maintained at all times and any restoration work and expense is the responsibility of the permit holder.
- No damage or pruning of the street tree is permitted. No climbers such as ivy are to be planted at the base of any street tree.
- Council may issue a permit with special conditions.
- Council has the right to reject any written application if it considers the application inappropriate to the area.
- Council may direct the reinstatement of the nature strip at any time at the cost of the Permit Holder undertaking the planting.

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## What is a nature strip for?

Nature strips are the land that exists between a private property boundary and the road kerb or gutter. The land is public open space and is Council-owned and controlled. Technically, it is considered to be a part of the 'road reserve'.

This land is set aside for a number of purposes, including:

- footpaths for pedestrians, prams, mobility scooters and the like
- street trees
- people to get in and out of motor vehicles
- access to the letterboxes
- for services such as water, sewer, gas, telephone and power lines (sometimes underground and sometimes above ground on poles)
- placement of waste and recycling bins for kerbside collection
- street lighting, bus stops, bus shelters or seats.

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## Getting more out of your nature strip

Trees and other nature strip vegetation help shade and cool the local environment, making for more pleasant streets, especially during hot summer weather. Vegetation within the streetscape enhances an area's natural beauty, making them more appealing and enjoyable. When carefully designed and maintained, nature strips that are

planted with indigenous or native plants can support local biodiversity. This is especially relevant to streets within our "biodiversity corridors" or near our bushland reserves.

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## Who is responsible for maintaining nature strips?

### Residents and property owners

Council relies on residents and property owners to look after the nature strip in front of their house. This includes keeping lawns mowed, weeded and rubbish free.

Residents are invited to help support the health of street trees by watering the trees outside their property during dry conditions. Residents are not permitted to plant, prune or remove any Council trees planted on the nature strip

To enquire about your existing street tree, or to request a street tree, please contact Council's Customer Service Centre on **9262 6333** or [customer.service@whitehorse.vic.gov.au](mailto:customer.service@whitehorse.vic.gov.au).

If the nature strip has been damaged by building works undertaken on your or an adjoining property, the property owner or builder is responsible for repair.

### Whitehorse City Council

Council must ensure the condition of the nature strip is not a risk to public safety (for example, as a potential fire hazard, or a pedestrian trip hazard). Generally, Council does not undertake renovation or maintenance (including mowing, watering or

spraying with herbicides) of nature strips unless there is a risk to public safety.

Council plants, prunes and maintains all street trees in accordance with its tree management plan.

### Utility authorities

From time to time, Council or utility authorities (such as Melbourne Water or your gas or electricity network provider) will need to access a nature strip to install new infrastructure or undertake repair, maintenance or renewal works on services above or below ground (for example, to stormwater drains, mains water or gas pipes).

After these works are complete, the service authority is responsible for repair of the nature strip to a 'normal condition' (generally topsoil with grass seeds). The service authority is not obliged to reinstate any alternative landscaping (such as groundcover plantings). Council is not responsible for replacing plants or landscape materials as a result of such works.

Residents may be able to negotiate protection and/or reinstatement of nature strip plants or materials with the relevant service authority.

## How to Apply for a Nature Strip Planting Permit

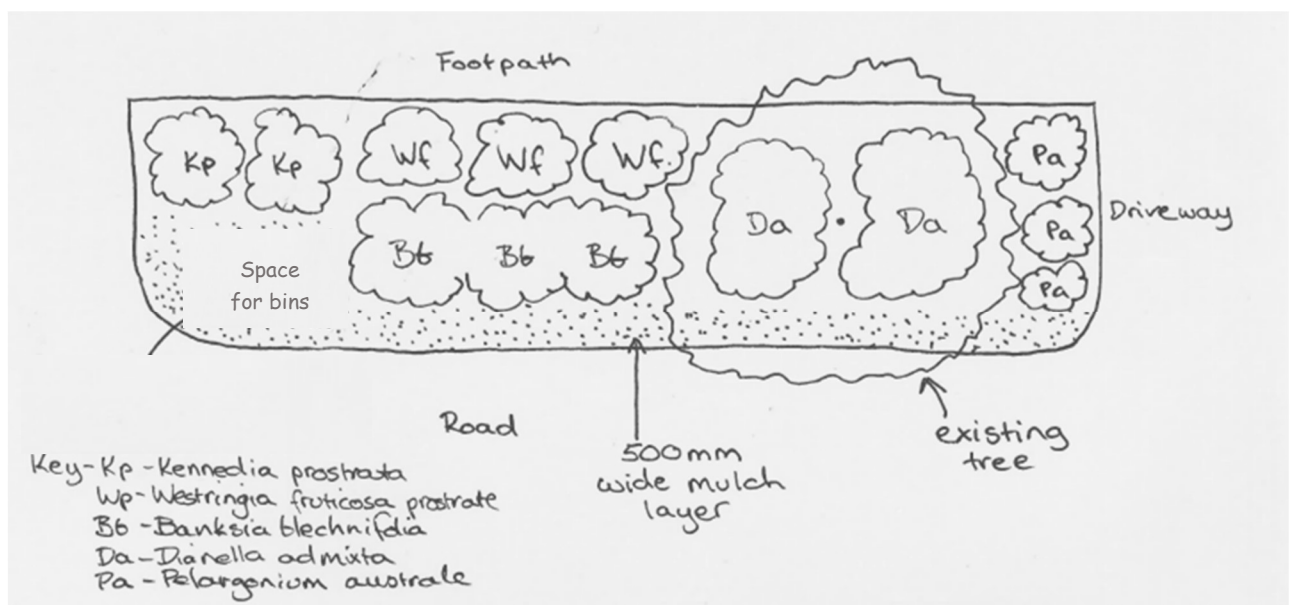
1. Create a sketch of your planned planting that includes existing features and proposed plants. Make sure that you include:

- allocated space for waste and recycling bins for kerbside pickup (ensuring 0.5m between bins, trees or other infrastructure)
- the location of existing infrastructure (plantings are to be no closer than 0.5m from these)
- the driveway and footpath
- a minimum 0.5m clearance from the kerb to allow for access to and from parked cars.

2. Create a plant list with species that:

- will not grow taller than 0.5 m (to maintain pedestrian and driver 'line of sight')
- are hardy and drought tolerant - Refer to pages 8 and 9 for suggested plants.

For example



3. Talk to your neighbours about your plan.

You will need to confirm in your application that you have talked with your neighbours about the proposed changes to the nature strip, and that they find the change acceptable.

4. Call "[Dial Before You Dig](https://www.dialbeforeyoudig.com.au/)" on 1100.

Before works commence find out if there are any pipes or service lines under the ground and how deep they are to avoid causing damage to infrastructure.

5. Complete the online application and submit.

Click on the below link to access the online application form

<https://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/waste-environment/trees-and-gardens/naturestrips/naturestrip-planting>

## Other Considerations

### **Intersections**

Near driveways, street corners and intersections, take particular care to keep all nature strip vegetation below 50cm in height to ensure good sightlines for road users and pedestrians.

### **Safety**

To minimise risk, rocks, boulders, tree branches and bollards cannot be placed on the nature strip. All plants and mulch must be kept within the nature strip area itself (not spilling onto the footpath or kerb) to maintain a safe and clear footpath and road.

### **Know your site**

Consider how often people may need to walk across your nature strip. If you live near a school or kinder, this may be quite often. How do you use your nature strip? As a place to put the bins or admire?

### **Check your soil**

It's important to prepare the soil before planting. Rich and healthy soil will help to keep your garden growing well and reduce pests and disease. For more information on soil improvement, fertilising and mulching visit your local nursery.

### **Talk to the neighbours**

Consider your neighbours and check in with them about your plans. They may even decide to follow suit.

### **Dial Before You Dig**

It is essential that you call "[Dial Before You Dig](#)" on 1100 before works commence to find out if there are any pipes or service lines under the ground.

### **Minimise herbicides, fertilisers and pesticides**

To support healthy waterways and local biodiversity, minimise or avoid using synthetic fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides.

### **Look after your street trees**

Any landscaping should support the ongoing health of your street tree (for example, maintaining organic mulch around the tree can help maintain soil moisture). Minimise soil disturbance within the tree's root zone by using hand tools rather than machinery if planting groundcovers and small shrubs.



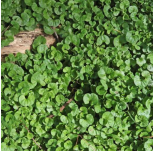
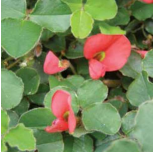
## Suitable Plantings

Below are some indigenous plants that are suitable for planting on most nature strips. For a low maintenance option, consider a lawn of native grasses with a scattering of wildflowers. It can be walked on and even mown over every few years if necessary. These can be purchased from our local community nurseries. Visit their websites to find out more:

### Whitehorse Indigenous Nurseries

Greenlink Nursery Box Hill North <https://greenlinkboxhill.org/>  
 Bungalook Nursery Blackburn South <https://www.wcipp.org.au/>

Photo	Common name <i>Botanical name</i>	Height (m)	Details
	Knead Wallaby Grass <i>Austrodanthonia geniculata</i>	0.2	A short tufting grass with fluffy seed heads. Can take foot traffic and will seed prolifically. Mow occasionally to rejuvenate.
	Weeping Grass <i>Microlaena stipoides</i>	0.4	One of the best indigenous lawn alternatives, Weeping Grass will cope with shade and foot traffic. Mow occasionally to rejuvenate.
	Ruby Saltbush <i>Enchylaena tomentosa</i>	0.5	Attractive hardy plant useful for undershrub plantings. Fruit colour variation provides an interesting feature. A low spreading or upright woody shrub.
	Common Everlasting <i>Chrysocephalum apiculatum</i>	0.3	Small, spreading perennial with silver foliage and bright yellow flower heads appearing in clusters.
	Cut Leaf Daisy <i>Brachyscome multifida</i>	0.4	Great for colour and effective as a mass planting.
	Spreading Flax-Lily <i>Dianella revoluta</i>	0.3	Great for planting near your street tree this tufting plant will produce small blue flowers above the foliage.
	Button Everlasting <i>Coronidium scorpioides</i>	0.3	Woolly, green leaves with a single yellow flower head. Grows well in dry conditions.
	Wattle Mat Rush <i>Lomandra filiformis</i>	0.5	A compact perennial herb with bright yellow flowers. Best planted in clumps.
	Austral Stork's Bill <i>Pelagonium australe</i>	0.4	A clumping perennial herb with attractive white or pink flowers. Brilliant red leaves in late autumn. Place out of the way of foot traffic.

Photo	Common name <i>Botanical name</i>	Height (m)	Details
	Blushing Bindweed <i>Convolvulus angustissimus</i>	0.1	A trailing perennial that will add a splash of pink to the nature strip
	Grass Trigger Plant <i>Stylidium graminifolium</i>	0.5	A clumping perennial with spikes of striking pale pink to magenta flowers.
	Kidney Creeper <i>Dichondra repens</i>	0.05	A prostrate ground cover that is useful for binding the soil. Can tolerate foot traffic. Easy to propagate by division.
	Running Postman <i>Kennedia prostrata</i>	creeper	Dense, flat ground covering plant with red pea-shaped flowers.

Other species that you may wish to consider that are not indigenous to Whitehorse but are very low and tolerant of some disturbance may be worth considering.

Common name <i>Botanical name</i>	Details
<a href="#"><u>Matted Pratia—<i>Lobelia pedunculata</i></u></a>	A very low plant with lots of tiny white flowers, useful for a shady spot.
Bungleweed— <i>Ajuga</i> spp	Also good for shady areas, <i>Ajuga</i> forms a dense low mat of green or burgundy leaves
Creeping Thyme— <i>Thymus serpyllum</i>	Planting herbs in the nature strip will release amazing smells if stepped on. The insects will also appreciate the flowers
Prostrate Mint— <i>Mentha requienii</i>	This herb will also cope with light foot traffic and provide wonderful scent.
Lamb's Ear— <i>Stachys byzantina</i>	With grey furry leaves this is a great ground cover if you want something tactile. A good choice for a sunny spot.
<i>Banksia blechnifolia</i>	A prostrate <i>Banksia</i> with serrated foliage and brown flowers held down at ground level, very interesting and eye catching.
Prostrate Coastal Rosemary— <i>Westringia fruticosa</i> 'Flat and Fruity'	Coastal Rosemary is a very popular low maintenance plant for sunny spots. This prostrate cultivar will form a mat up to 30cm high and will produce lots of flowers for insects.



Any listed environmental weeds of Whitehorse are not permitted

For a full list and diagnostic photos of environmental weeds of Whitehorse visit [Noxious Weeds of Whitehorse | Whitehorse City Council](#)

Environmental Weed Common Name	Environmental Weed Botanical Name
Boneseed	<i>Chrysanthemoides monilifera</i>
Agapanthus	<i>Agapanthus praecox subsp. Orientalis</i>
Angled Onion	<i>Allium triquetrum</i>
Asparagus Fern	<i>Asparagus scandens/ Asparagus densiflorus</i>
Blue Periwinkle	<i>Vinca major</i>
Bridal Veil Creeper, Smilax	<i>Asparagus asparagoides</i>
Cape Broom, Montpellier Broom	<i>Genista monspessulana</i>
Cleavers	<i>Galium aparine</i>
Creeping Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>
English Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Japanese Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera japonica</i>
Mirror Bush	<i>Coprosma angustifolia</i>
Montbretia	<i>Cosmosia x crocosmiiflora</i>
Morning Glory	<i>Ipomoea indica</i>
Wandering Creeper	<i>Tradescantia fluminensis</i>
Watsonia	<i>Watsonia meriana var bulbifera</i>

## When is a permit not required?

No permit is required to establish or maintain a grassed lawn within the nature strip.

If you are simply maintaining or changing the type of grass to another kind of low growing grass then you do not need a permit if you intend to keep it as a lawn.

You may wish to establish, native species such are Weeping Grass (*Microlaena stipoides*), Kneed Wallaby Grass (*Austrodanthonia geniculata*) and Clustered Wallaby Grass (*Austrodanthonia racemosum*). These species are native require only periodic mowing.

## What is not permitted?

The following elements are not permitted to be installed on the nature strip:

- ✘ Synthetic grass
- ✘ Sand
- ✘ Seating
- ✘ Pebbles
- ✘ Large rocks
- ✘ Planting boxes
- ✘ Garden ornaments and statues
- ✘ Constructed structures
- ✘ Mulches such as straw, underfelt, scoria, blue metal, pebbles or other loose stones
- ✘ Laying of additional concrete or asphalt
- ✘ Altering the width of the nature strip, road, kerb or channel
- ✘ Changing ground levels or drainage of the street (for example, through excessive mounding of soil, use of loose materials, or other changes that block drainage).
- ✘ Hard landscaping elements including stakes, retaining walls, raised edging, planter boxes/ beds, bollards, ornaments, protruding rocks, bricks, pavers, sleepers, trellis or timber
- ✘ Environmental weeds [Noxious Weeds of Whitehorse | Whitehorse City Council](#)

## Free Advice

Gardens for Wildlife Guides can provide you with some advice. For more information visit [www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/gardens-for-wildlife](http://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/gardens-for-wildlife)

These guidelines have been developed in line with the Whitehorse Urban Forest Strategy.