

# Guidelines for Road Reserve Vegetation in Urban Areas





## What is the nature strip and why is the nature strip important?

A street verge or nature strip as an area of road reserve which is public land located between a property boundary and the adjacent trafficable road. These areas serve an important function and can improve the amenity and safety of road users when constructed and maintained properly that:

- provides an area for planting trees important to the streetscape character
- often contains vital underground and overhead infrastructure including power, water, sewer, stormwater and telecommunications
- are key areas for pedestrian movement and may include formed footpaths.



## Who is responsible for nature strips?

Given the area is public land and required for services and access, Council is responsible for the road reserve. However, the adjacent householder generally maintains the area. Council is not in a position to maintain all nature strips to the aesthetic level usually expected by residents without reducing service levels in other areas. There is a general community acceptance that maintaining the nature strip in front of one's property is an integral part of contributing to the overall amenity of the local neighbourhood.

Nonetheless, any works within the road reserve including the installation or removal of structures (including trees) or digging up or disturbing the surface, requires the approval of Council.

Street trees within the road reserve are a Council asset which are to be maintained in accordance with Council's *Tree Management Protocol*.

Council is not required to reinstate any landscaping or any damage to nature strip landscaping or their contents including damage caused by the public, animals, or weather events. Where for example, utility service providers (e.g. electricity, water or telecommunications) need to service their infrastructure, notice will be given to the householder if the landscaping is to be disturbed and generally the service providers will not reinstate landscaping after works.

## Street trees replacement: No net loss

Street trees are recognised as 'green infrastructure' which provides important ecological and social functions that translate into tangible community benefits that span many areas including health, social interactions, ecology, water and air quality, climate and economy.

Street trees cannot be removed or pruned without Council permission. Should it be necessary for a street tree to be removed or substantially pruned, the tree is required to be replaced in accordance with Council's *Tree Management Protocol*.

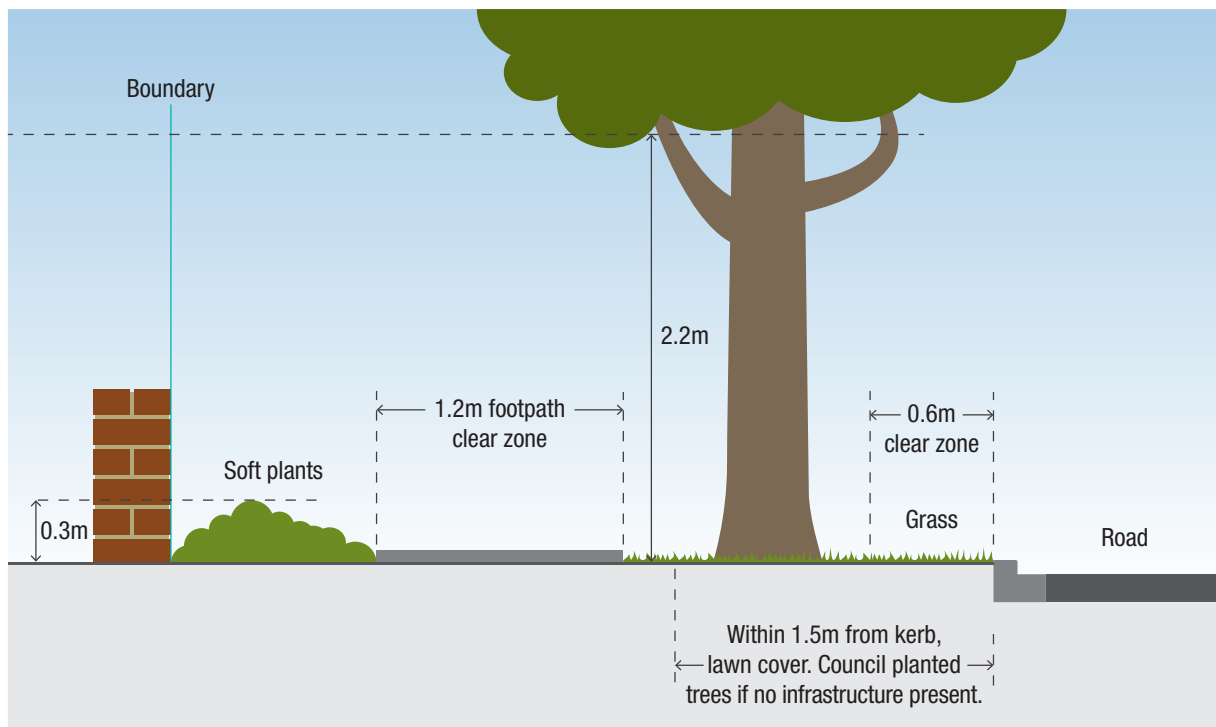
Property owners may contact Council and request street trees to be planted adjacent to their property. Generally, only two street trees per property are permitted however requests are considered on a case by case basis. Street tree species selection, planting and maintenance must be in accordance with Council's *Tree Management Protocol*.

## Road reserve landscaping requirements

**Approval from Council is required for any landscaping other than mowed turf and Council planted street trees.**

Standard nature strips within the Tweed are to meet the following:

- be covered full width with topsoil to a depth not less than 50mm and grassed
- be in a mowable condition, free from rocks and loose stones and graded to even running contours in order to guarantee a high standard of maintenance
- feature a street tree where site constraints permit
- be maintained so as to protect and cultivate any established street trees – these trees are considered Council's asset
- include the clear zones outlined overleaf. The footpath area must remain flush and transversable for all pedestrians and free from all obstructions whether formed (concreted) or unformed (grassed). The area behind the kerb is to allow for pedestrians exiting parked vehicles.



Section of a standard roadside nature strip.

Should unauthorised landscaping be identified by Council, the resident or landowner responsible will be contacted in writing to remove the non-compliant landscaping adjacent to their property. If the landscaping is not rectified within the nominated period, Council can arrange the landscaping removal and disposal.

### Additional road reserve landscaping approval requirements

As Council acknowledges the value of vegetation within nature strip and the benefits mature trees in particular bring to the community, landscaping beyond the standard roadside nature strip is supported in principle.

However, given the important infrastructure in these areas, potential land use conflicts and public safety hazards that can arise, where further landscaping is desired beyond the standard arrangement, prior approval from Council is required.

Any landscaping proposed to be approved must comply with the following and be maintained as such into perpetuity. The following will also apply as ongoing conditions to be met.

- Vegetation must be consistent with Council's *Tree Management Protocol*, particularly with regard to species selection.
- Vegetation must not interfere with car or pedestrian sight lines or mailbox access.
- Vegetation must not protrude onto any formed footpath, road or driveway nor obstruct pedestrian access whether or not a footpath exists.
- Vegetation must not interfere with overhead or underground services at the time of planting and into the future.
- No garden structures, retaining walls, irrigation systems or raised garden beds are permitted.
- Vegetation must not have thorns.
- Vegetation must not create issues such as excessive fallen fruit or fruit fly infestation.
- Vegetation must not be a known or likely environmental weed. Council reserves the right to remove known or likely environmental weed species without compensation.
- Fertiliser use is permitted. Organic manures are preferred. These must be applied in a way that does not cause odour problems or potential for stormwater pollution.
- It is the adjacent property owner's responsibility to maintain the vegetation. This includes planting, weeding, cleaning, mulching, pruning and watering. If the maintenance of the plants cannot continue, it is adjacent property owner's responsibility to return the area to a standard mowable nature strip.
- Council will take no responsibility for any damage to plants by weather events, public or otherwise.
- Pebbles or mulch is not to be located within the 1.5m setback adjacent to the road in order to avoid them ending up on the road or collecting in stormwater infrastructure.
- In the interest of public safety, Council reserves the right to remove any non-compliant landscaping, to add extra conditions or require the removal of vegetation.
- Future applications will not support plastic artificial turf. Artificial turf, where approved, is to be installed in accordance with manufacturer's specifications and so as to not create any trip hazards. Council or other utility providers will not be responsible for damage to or reinstatement of artificial turf in carrying out works on the verge.

Should you require any further information regarding these guidelines, please contact Council's Roads and Stormwater unit on 02 6670 2400.



## Road reserve landscaping examples

### Compliant



## Non-compliant



Keep mulch away from the gutter.



No pedestrian access along verge. Keep mulch away from gutter.



Rocks are not permitted in proximity to the gutter. Does not provide suitable pedestrian access along the verge.



Trip hazards and mulch adjacent to the gutter.



Tree canopies obstructing pedestrian access.



*Contact and connect*

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