City of
KINGSTON

COMMUNITY LOCAL LAW 2015

Nature Strip Guidelines

community inspired leadership

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Nature Strip Guidelines

1. INTRODUCTION

Nature strips play an important role in the aesthetic, environmental and social health of the municipality. Nature strips complement and enhance the streetscape by providing a "green" zone between the carriageway, pedestrian footpath and the adjacent property. They provide a buffer between pedestrian and vehicular traffic and an opportunity for the establishment of street trees which fulfil a significant role in streetscape character.

While Council is the responsible authority, it does not undertake any renovation or maintenance (including mowing and watering) of nature strips unless the condition of the nature strip is considered to pose a hazard.

Council is required to provide a safe environment, respond to any public safety issues and minimise the risk to the community that could arise from nature strip landscaping. As a result, there are a number of restrictions placed on the development of nature strips.

Ongoing drought conditions and the introduction of water restrictions have heightened the community's awareness of water usage and as a result more residents are seeking alternative treatments to the traditional grass nature strip. This guideline, outlines circumstances where a nature strip can involve alternative landscape treatment.

Council is willing to work with property owners who wish to replace an existing grass nature strip with other plants or landscape materials.

This document provides guidance for residents regarding the development and maintenance of nature strips throughout the municipality as well as any modification of a standard grassed nature strip. Property owners are required to adhere to the guidelines when undertaking any nature strip construction, landscaping or alternative treatment other than mown grass.

2. DEFINITION

For the purpose of this guideline, a nature strip is defined as an area of public land located between the pedestrian footpath and the back of kerb. In the majority of cases, a nature strip accommodates services, a street tree and is grassed and with the support of the adjacent resident, nature strips are regularly maintained in a safe and aesthetically pleasing condition.

3. MAINTENANCE OF EXISTING NATURE STRIPS

3.1. Street trees

Street trees are planted and maintained by Council in accordance with Council's Tree Policy and Tree Management Guidelines.

Street trees are inspected on a two-year cycle and if required, pruned to ensure tree health and required clearances that satisfy Council's legislative and management obligations to residents and visitors to the area.

Street trees are planted at regular intervals along the length of a street and at a density that will provide a sense of continuity and scale to the streetscape. Where reasonable, one tree will be planted in front of each property throughout the City. The growth characteristics of the tree and the capacity of the street will also determine spacing.

Residents are not permitted to prune, remove or plant any trees within a nature strip.

3.2. Repair of nature strip damage

Council and utility/service authorities that supply water, gas, electricity and telecommunications, may from time to time require access to the nature strip to perform maintenance work. Council and utility/service authorities are responsible for repair and reinstatement of the nature strip upon work completion.

Councils and utility authorities are not required to reinstate nature strips with landscape materials, irrigation systems and plants other than grass. Councils and utility authorities are not responsible for replacing plants, landscape materials or irrigation systems as a result of such works.

No compensation will be provided to residents by Council should any infrastructure or street tree pruning work have a negative impact on nature strip landscaping.

If the nature strip is damaged as a result of building works on private property, the builder or property owner is responsible for repair and reinstatement of the nature strip. Council is not responsible for replacing plants or landscape materials as a result of such works. Council will attend to nature strips identified as a risk to public safety.

Council reserves the right to install a footpath at any time. Council will not reimburse for loss of plants/ damage to landscaping where a footpath is installed.

4. NATURE STRIP LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

Nature strips can be landscaped to achieve the following:

- Grassed nature strip
- Native grass nature strip
- Permeable surface treatment using a fine gravel mulch or organic mulch that is stable.
- Planting with low growing ground covers.

4.1. Grassed nature strip

Grassed nature strips are the most common form of nature strip treatment throughout Kingston. The use of drought tolerant grasses provides a low maintenance treatment which requires periodic mowing to maintain.

4.2. Native Grass nature strip

The use of drought tolerant native grasses provides a low maintenance treatment which may require periodic weeding to maintain.
Recommended species include:

- Kneed Wallaby Grass *(Austrodanthonia geniculata)*
- Clustered Wallaby Grass *(Austrodanthonia racemosa)*
- Weeping Grass *(Microlaena stipoides)*

4.3. Permeable surface treatment using a fine gravel mulch or organic mulch

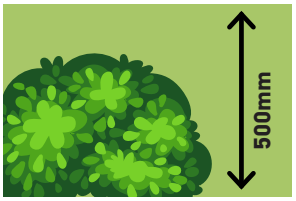
An alternative to grass is a permeable surface treatment such as granitic gravel or similar graded material. While this treatment assists to retain soil moisture and does not require mowing or watering, it will require periodic weeding and maintenance. Two mulch types can be used:

Fine gravel mulches (75mm depth) such as granitic gravel or Lilydale toppings.
Organic mulch (75mm depth) such as graded bark or vegetative mulch. Mulch has a tendency to spill out onto the footpath and kerb and unless the nature strip is fully planted out, thereby Materials such as straw, underfelt, stones, scoria, blue metal, pebbles or other loose stones are not permitted.

4.4. Planting with ground covers

An alternative to grass or a plain permeable surface treatment (mulch) is a planted and mulched nature strip. When well maintained, this treatment provides a soft and visually pleasing alternative. The following requirements are required:

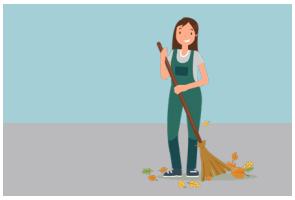
Plants must be maintained at a maximum height of 500mm.



Ground cover plants are required to be set back 500mm from back of kerb to allow for opening of car doors.

Nature strips on a corner property are limited to ground cover plants only, to ensure sight lines for motorists and pedestrians.

Plants and mulch are to be maintained within the nature strip area and not encroach on the pedestrian footpath, kerb or road.



4.5. Need to allow for Waste Collection Bins

As a result of any landscaping and plantings on the nature strip there must be enough space provided for the provision of the placement of waste collection mobile garbage bins (MGB's) which shall include both Garbage, and Recycling. The nature strip area shall also be flat to allow for easy collection of these bins.

4.6. Not permitted on nature strips

To comply with these guidelines, Council will not permit the following:

- Plants that are prickly or spiky
- Woody shrubs
- Shrubs that grow greater than 500mm high
- Weed species
- Residents to remove or plant any trees within a nature strip.
- Works that create a fire or health hazard.
- Irrigation systems within a nature strip.
- Temporary or permanent electrical wiring on a nature strip as well as lighting of trees.
- Herbicide application to permanently retain a nature strip devoid of grass, is not permitted.
- Property owners or representatives converting a grass nature strip to asphalt, concrete or synthetic surface (artificial grass).
- Allowance for car parking on nature-strip.
- Surfaces and plants to impact negatively on street tree health.
- The level of the nature strip to be altered.
  (Unless otherwise approved by Council in writing)

Other than for Council authorised projects, such as Water Sensitive Urban Design drainage landscapes that are designed to improve storm water quality; the use of hard landscaping elements such as rocks, timber, sleepers, retaining walls, bollards, pavers, stepping stones and ornaments is not permitted.

4.7. Works on nature strips should ensure the following

Provide a clear line of sight for motorists and ease of pedestrian movement, in particular alighting from cars from both the street, and vehicle crossovers (eg no vegetation is to exceed 500mm in height).

Provide ease of access to underground services (such as Telstra, gas) and overhead Services (Street tree pruning and powerlines) and should the ground be disturbed, it will be made safe and only be reinstated by council or contractor to council prescribed standard of sandy loam soil and seed.

Provision of access for people to parked cars needs to be taken into account in any design.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY

As a nature strip forms part of the road reserve and is public land, Council is required to provide a safe environment, respond to any public safety issues and minimise the risk to the community that could arise within a nature strip.

Council will take appropriate action to rectify problems in relation to tripping hazards or safety issues. Any feature that is deemed to be an immediate public risk such as a pedestrian trip or fall hazard, obstruction or other hazard may be removed from the nature strip without consultation or warning.

If the property owner fails to take action, a delegated Council Officer will issue a “Notice to Comply”, requesting that the specific problem be fixed by an allocated date. Failure to take action following a “Notice to Comply” can result in an on-the-spot fine or infringement notice. All fines would be issued under Council’s Local Laws. This applies to non-compliant landscaping found within nature strips. The value of the penalty is reviewed on a regular basis.

6. EXISTING MODIFIED NATURE STRIPS

Alterations maybe required to nature strips that have already been landscaped or modified by residents in order that they meet the requirements of the City of Kingston Nature strip guidelines. Modifications to these nature strips will be undertaken by the relevant property owner, in discussion with Council.

7. CONTACT

For further information or guidance regarding alternative nature strip treatments, please contact Council’s Parks Department on 1300 653 356.