

NATURE STRIP POLICY 2022

Approval Level:	Council
Policy Type:	Council
Approval Date:	12 December 2022
Review Cycle:	2 years
Review Date:	12 December 2024
Responsible Officer:	Coordinator of Public Space Design
Owner:	Parks and Open Space
Responsible Directorate:	Presentation and Assets
Relevant Legislation/Authority:	Local Government Act 2020
DOCSETID:	4858291

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

The Nature Strip Policy 2022 and accompanying Nature Strip Guidelines 2022 have been developed to provide clear direction to residents about what they can do on nature strips abutting their properties. Where a modification to the nature strip complies with the requirements of this Policy, a person will not be required to apply for a permit.¹ If the proposed modification does not comply with this Policy, a permit is required.

The objective of the Policy is to ensure that if nature strips are modified, they are landscaped and maintained appropriately to minimise the risk to the community. The nature strip must provide for unobstructed and safe flow of pedestrian traffic, access for postal deliveries, safety of vehicles using the road, kerbside parking, and safe and practical conditions for emptying municipal bins.

Please note that parking any vehicles or trailers on the nature strip is prohibited.²³

2. BACKGROUND

This Policy supersedes the Nature Strip Policy 2006 and has been updated to consider urban greening and cooling, promote biodiversity and to include a policy position on growing edibles in the road reserve.

The Nature Strip Policy 2022 also intends to achieve a balance between the benefits that well-maintained nature strips provide to Bendigo’s urban environment while recognising that any risks that could arise as a result of landscaping are managed to minimise loss and damage.

3. DEFINITION OF A NATURE STRIP

A nature strip is the area of public land situated between the property boundary and the road edge, excluding any public pavement. In most cases a nature strip is grassed, but in the circumstances provided for in this Policy, alternative landscape treatments can be considered.

4. MODIFYING NATURE STRIPS

Modifying nature strip landscaping is permitted, provided that the modifications comply with this Policy and accompanying Nature Strip Guidelines. If any proposed landscaping treatment does not comply with this

¹ Works Within Road Reserve Permit – Vehicle crossing / Nature strip landscaping

² Greater Bendigo City Council Community Local Law #2.4 – Motor vehicles on Council land

³ VicRoads Road Rule 197 – Stopping on a path, dividing strip, nature strip or painted island

Policy or the Guidelines, a permit is required. Applications for a permit can be made via the City of Greater Bendigo website or Customer Service Call Centre.

5. APPROVED NATURE STRIP MODIFICATION OPTIONS

Description of treatment options	Permit Required	Application Fee Required
Turf	No	No
Native grass	No	No
Granitic Sand, Organic or Inorganic Material	No	No
Understory planting	No	No
Edibles in raised planters	Yes	No
Any treatment that does not fit the descriptions above	Yes	Yes

A minimum footpath width of 1.5m clear of obstruction is to be retained.

Explanatory images, diagrams and helpful information are provided in the Nature Strip Guidelines to accompany the above. The Nature Strip Guidelines 2022 are accessible via the City of Greater Bendigo website or customer service call centre.

6. UNACCEPTABLE NATURE STRIP TREATMENTS

Synthetic turf, plastic or weed mat	Modification for vehicle or trailer parking
Laying of additional paving or concrete	Irrigation systems
Above ground edging or retaining walls	Letterboxes, which must be on private property.
Fencing; including metal stakes or star pickets	Any form of wiring
Shredded plant products such as wood chips and bark, other than that specified in Section 7 of this Guideline, or pea straw or similar.	Planting of street trees (this is happily done by the City – please make a request and we will program a tree specimen in the upcoming planting program)
Crushed rock or toppings larger than 20mm in size, bluestone pavers, road base, pavers, bollards, sculptures, and boulders	Planting of species that are known to be: Weeds of the Bendigo Region
Fruit or vegetable crops without a permit	

Please note that the City has the right to remove any landscaping deemed unsafe or inappropriate.

7. SAFETY MEASURES

7.1 Public safety while undertaking landscaping works

While undertaking landscaping works, the resident is responsible for erecting safety fencing to direct foot traffic around areas of uneven ground and modified ground surface. This fencing must not interfere with the footpath or be a hazard in itself. The safety fencing is used to delineate areas and guide pedestrian movement around an active work site.

Metal star pickets must never be used on nature strips because of the potential risks of electrocution if any power cable is inadvertently damaged.

No building materials or equipment are to be placed or stored on nature strips at any time. ⁴

⁴ Greater Bendigo City Council Community Local Law #11.15 – Building Material and Equipment

7.2 Fire Hydrant Visibility

Any modifications to the nature strip must not cover, obscure, or hide any fire hydrant or their marker posts. They must also not hinder or impede access to or / use of hydrants.

7.3 Excavation & Cultivation

Prior to carrying out any excavation or cultivation of a nature strip, the resident must contact and lodge an enquiry with **Before You Dig Australia** (BYDA) to establish the location of underground services. Damage caused to underground services can result in serious injury or death or may result in severe fines and repair costs.

As far as possible, all excavation and cultivation should be undertaken by hand and to a depth of no more than 150mm, as mechanical and deep excavation may cause damage to underground infrastructure and services. Care needs to be taken when excavating or cultivating near street trees to ensure no damage is caused to the root system. Guidance in relation to excavation around street trees is provided in the Nature Strip Guidelines. The resident is responsible for repairing any damage to City of Greater Bendigo assets caused by nature strip modification works.

8. UTILITIES AND MAINTENANCE WORK

The City of Greater Bendigo and utility companies may from time to time undertake maintenance and service upgrade work within and alongside a nature strip. While all care will be taken to reinstate nature strips to their former condition as part of maintenance activities, the City of Greater Bendigo cannot guarantee that utility companies or maintenance contractors will reinstate or replace plants, mulch, or any other modifications made to the nature strip, to the condition existing prior to maintenance work.

9. MAINTENANCE OF NATURE STRIPS

Generally, and with the exception of street tree planting and management, the City of Greater Bendigo does not maintain nature strips. It is common practice for residents of abutting properties to maintain nature strips by regular mowing, edging turf, weeding, and picking up litter.

The rateable owner adjacent to the nature strip is responsible for anything altered from standard City install, regardless of whether they were the initial installer or not. Any works completed on a nature strip remain the responsibility of the current property owner or occupant to maintain.

9.1 How nature strips are maintained

Residents must ensure that all nature strips modified in accordance with this Policy are always kept in a well-maintained and safe condition by:

- ensuring plants are pruned so that they do not protrude onto pathways, driveways or over the kerb;
- keeping plants (other than street trees) pruned to a height of no more than 1 metre at all times
 - plants must be kept under 1m in height when within 1 metre of the road and adjacent driveways to maintain pedestrian and driver lines of sight
 - The City of Greater Bendigo encourages planting of shrubs no taller than 0.5m tall.
- keeping the nature strip free of weeds and rubbish, any tripping hazards, and any protruding objects.

9.2 Failure to maintain a nature strip

Failure to appropriately maintain a nature strip can be characterised as a breach of community local law by one or more of the below:

- The condition of the nature strip is a traffic or pedestrian hazard;
- The nature strip landscaping interferes with pedestrian access;
- The nature strip landscaping is a fire hazard;

- The nature strip landscaping interferes with the visibility of motorists, cyclists and pedestrians at intersections, curves in the road and near driveways;
- The presentation of the nature strip impacts unfavourably on local streetscape amenity.

If a resident fails to maintain a grassed or modified nature strip or a nature strip does not comply with this Policy, the resident may be issued with a Notice to Comply⁵ to reinstate or modify in accordance with the Nature Strip Policy.

10. ENFORCEMENT

10.1 Failure to Comply

Failure to comply with a Notice to Comply will result in infringement⁶. Ongoing non-compliance may result in the resident being subject to prosecution from Local Law.

10.2 Removal

If the City of Greater Bendigo must reinstate the nature strip, the cost of the reinstatement will be charged to the resident who did the landscaping.

10.3 Existing Modified Nature Strips

If your nature strip is already modified, please contact The City on 1300 002 642 to discuss how this can be brought to be compliant with this policy.

Alternately you may wish to remove the modifications and revert to grass. The rateable owner adjacent to the nature strip is responsible for anything altered from standard City install, regardless of whether they were the initial installer or not. Any works completed on a nature strip remain the responsibility of the current property owner or occupant to maintain.

11. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Readers are encouraged to access relevant documents and/or resources which are available as per the below:

- Accompanying Nature Strip Guidelines 2022
- Road Management Act
- Essential Services
- Invasive Plants and Animals Policy, 2019
- WWRR Application form
- Urban Tree Management Policy, 2017
- Tree Protection Fact Sheet

12. ENQUIRIES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For further information regarding this policy contact the City's Customer Service Call Centre.

⁵ Greater Bendigo City Council Local Law #10.19 – Notice to Comply

⁶ Greater Bendigo City Council Local Law #10.26 – Infringement Notices