Purpose

These guidelines have been developed to inform residents of their obligations and the conditions associated with undertaking plantings within the road verge, on Council controlled roads. Residents are required to fully comply with these guidelines when creating a new verge garden.

Council acknowledges that verge gardens exist which pre-date the guidelines. It is not intended to require those verge gardens to comply with the guidelines unless public safety and pedestrian access issues are raised with Council.

This document is designed to:
• Ensure that all plantings by the community within the road verge are managed in a safe, efficient manner and maintained to an acceptable standard.
• Standardise processes and procedures for the development of community plantings within the road verge.
• Clarify the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in community plantings within the road verge.

Road verge

The road verge forms part of the road reserve between the kerb and the front property boundary, or where no kerb exists, between the table-drain and the front property boundary and is controlled and managed by Council.

The road verge provides a suitable space for:
• Pedestrians
• Footpaths
• Public utilities such as power, water, gas and telecommunications services, and
• Essential services such as bus stops

What can I do?

The owner/occupier of a property may landscape parts of the road verge immediately fronting their property, provided that the works meet with these guidelines.

Works that do not meet these guidelines cannot be undertaken.

It is the owner/occupier’s responsibility to maintain garden areas constructed within the verge and to preserve a safe verge environment for pedestrians and road users. Council has a duty of care to ensure the verges are compliant with the relevant legislation, policies and guidelines for the safety of the community.
What is appropriate treatment?
Council supports the installation and maintenance of soft, water wise landscaping on the verge to create a safe and aesthetically pleasing environment. Soft landscaping includes grass (drought tolerant varieties are preferred), ground cover, low shrubs and vegetable gardens. Water wise plants are those that are drought tolerant and have a reduced need for fertilizer. In addition, local native plants can provide a usable habitat for birds, small reptiles and insects, and increase biodiversity within the region.

The installation of hard surfaces/paved areas within the street verge is actively discouraged due to increased stormwater runoff and limited visual amenity.

Design considerations
The landscape design must not create any undue hazards to road users or pedestrians. Plants should not interfere with driver or pedestrian sightlines, must be maintained to less than 0.75 metres in height and should not encroach onto footpaths or roadways. The planting of local native plants is encouraged due to their tolerance to harsh, dry conditions and their minimal requirement for fertilizer.

Where a concrete footpath is constructed across the frontage of the property a minimum distance of 0.75 metres immediately adjacent to the kerb, must be kept clear to allow for:
- Passengers to safely alight from any vehicle parked on the road
- To prevent damage to vehicle doors opening out over the kerb and verge
- To allow space for bin collection

Where a concrete footpath is not constructed across the frontage of the property a minimum distance of 2.0 metres immediately adjacent to the kerb, must be kept clear to also allow for pedestrian access.

Ideally the clear area adjacent to the kerb, as outlined above, should remain grassed. Where street trees occur in this space, organic, seasoned, large particle mulch, such as wood chips is considered an acceptable option. Mulch is to be replenished as required and grass is to be regularly cut to ensure that the area is maintained to a suitably safe standard.
Not permitted
The placement of the following materials, objects and/or barriers are not permitted within the road verge:

- fencing
- concrete slabs
- bricks
- the use of artificial grass
- rocks
- loose inorganic materials (stones & gravel) greater than 5mm in size
- logs
- bollards
- reticulation control boxes
- garden ornaments
- plants with sharp spikes or thorns
- garden stakes

Plants with thorns and spikes include, but are not limited to, roses with thorny stems, yuccas, cacti, and agaves.


Vegetable gardens
Vegetable gardens may be permitted if the vegetation does not exceed 0.75 metres in height, the ground is not raised and remains reasonably level, and stakes or fences are not used. Root vegetables and herbs are particularly suitable for verge vegetable gardens. Plants such as chillies which could be hazardous to children if ingested, are not permitted.

Your verge boundary
The resident must notify their neighbours about any proposed verge treatment works and agree on the location of the boundary between their adjacent verges.

Safety on your verge
Temporary barricades for the purpose of establishing verge landscaping are acceptable provided that the materials used do not create a hazard and are identified with sufficient numbers of reflective markers to ensure the safety of pedestrians. Barriers must not be erected across pedestrian access ways and must be removed once the garden is established (Maximum 2 months).

The level and grade of the verge, and between adjoining verges, is to remain consistent and free of barriers, trip hazards, excessive undulations, mounds, holes, depressions, ridges and terraces. Edgings and dividers are permitted only to the extent required to provide sufficient division, and provided that they are flush with the verge surface.

Access to your verge
Adequate access to the property letterbox for delivery by Australia Post must be provided, and a suitable location is to be provided on the verge in front of the property and immediately behind the kerb line for weekly collection of rubbish bins.
Roads and traffic

For safety, verge gardens can only be constructed on Council managed roads that are either low traffic roads or roads where kerbside parking is permitted. Verge gardens are not permitted on roads under the jurisdiction of the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR). Council can provide advice on whether a road is suitable for development of a verge garden, if required.

When working on your verge planting, be aware that you are working in a public place so keep an eye out for other verge users including passing cars, bicycles and pedestrians.

Make sure the height and width of your planting and associated infrastructure is not going to obstruct sight lines for pedestrians, cyclists and cars.

If planting placements are considered inappropriate, Council will notify the resident and require the area to be appropriately rectified removed. If this notice is not complied with, Council will remove any offending plants or garden structure. In the event of such removal, Council will not be responsible for reinstatement or cost of items removed, and Council will recover the cost of removing and disposing of materials.

Tips before you start

- Try to use native or water-wise plants and organic products where possible.
- Consider watering by hand with collected rainwater or recycled water (irrigation systems are not permitted) and mulch to retain soil moisture.
- As verge gardens are located on public footways, the Council cannot take responsibility for any damage to gardens or their contents.
- You are responsible for maintaining your garden and keeping it safe, clean, healthy and attractive. Council officers may issue clean-up notices to residents or businesses who fail to maintain verge gardens in a safe and satisfactory condition.
- Stay sun safe while you garden.
- Contact Dial Before You Dig to help locate any underground services on 1100.com.au or call 1100.
Note: The above garden is a good example of how a verge planting should be maintained. It is compliant because it maintains a minimum 2.0 metre clear area adjacent to the kerb for vehicle access, bin collection, and still allows pedestrian access to the mailbox and across the verge.

Conflict resolution and complaints procedure

Verge plantings should be visually pleasing and aim to promote local harmony and acceptance by neighbours. However, it is possible that conflicts may sometimes arise. In the event of a conflict arising, measures should be taken immediately to seek its resolution.

Where specific concerns are raised about a verge garden or plantings that pre-date Council’s guidelines, Council’s Manager Asset Maintenance, in consultation with the relevant Divisional Councillor, will inspect the site and determine on a case-by-case basis if works are necessary to modify the existing plantings.

Circumstances may arise where Council directs a resident to modify their verge garden within a specified period. If the resident fails to undertake the work, Council reserves the right to undertake the work and may seek to recover costs associated with completing the work where justifiable.

Constructing a verge garden

The important question to be asked is; “Will my verge garden comply with all of the requirements of this guideline?”

If you answer ‘yes’ then complete the following checklist and submit to Council. Please note that all responses to the checklist questions should be ‘yes’ for your proposal to comply.

Once you have submitted the checklist, with an accompanying sketch of your proposed verge garden, you may commence construction.