



Nature Strip Guidelines

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Guideline Governance

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Road Safety Act 1986 (Victoria)

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Purpose

The Nature Strip Guidelines outline the considerations for gardening on nature strips across the municipality. It includes the safety and tree protection requirements.

Council supports nature strip planting provided the nature strip remains safe and functional, no damage occurs to trees or other assets, and the nature strip is well maintained.

Outcomes

The key objective of these guidelines is to develop clear processes to enable residents to plant on nature strips. This includes:

Definitions

Table 1 Definition of terms

Term	Definition
Nature strip	<p>A nature strip is the land between a residential property boundary and the roadside kerb.</p> <p>Nature strips are publicly owned and typically include grass with trees and a footpath.</p> <p>The nature strips are also used for household bins and hard rubbish collection.</p>
Service infrastructure	Infrastructure including telecommunications, energy, water, gas, sewerage and stormwater are in and above the nature strip
Median Strip	Grass/treed area in the middle of a road

Where can I plant?

The nature strip guidelines apply to:

- residential streets outside a property that you occupy
- commercial areas outside a property where you have a ground floor business.

Nature strip planting is allowed where:

- a typical grass nature strip already exists
- on hard surface nature strips where the verge area is wide enough to safely accommodate a raised garden box.

Nature strip planting is not permitted:

- on a street with narrow footpaths
- in laneways
- and on median strips.



Other opportunities to garden in public space can be discovered on our website

<https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/people-and-community/community-gardens> .

On your nature strip you can:

Remove any existing grass and replace with:

- drought tolerant exotic and/or native grass lawn
- groundcovers and low growing shrubs.
- install raised planter boxes.

A list of suggested plants for can be found on our website:

<https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/media/ekglij05y/recommended-plant-species-list.pdf>

Information about plants and biodiversity can be found on our website:

<https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/people-and-community/sustainability-action/protecting-plants-and-animals>.



Before you start

When planning your nature strip garden, check the location of underground services using Dial-Before-You-Dig. Think about the materials and plants required and ongoing maintenance and watering. Residents/business owners are responsible for costs for planting nature strips, including all materials, labour, watering and any incidental damage to public infrastructure.

Requirements for residents

To plant the nature strip in front of your dwelling, you must:

- be a resident of the city of Port Phillip
- if a tenant, have written approval from property owner, body corporate and/or managing agent
- if in an owner-occupied apartment, consent must be obtained in accordance with the terms of the body corporate or other applicable legal arrangements
- complete an online agreement to register your nature strip garden <link>.

You should also talk to your neighbours about your plans to plant the nature strip in front of your dwelling.

Requirements for business owners

You can only plant in front of a business in an area that is already grass or a garden bed.

If your area is paved you will need to apply for a planter box permit through our Footpath Trading team <https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/council-services/business-in-port-phillip/business-permits/footpath-trading-permit>.

To plant the nature strip in front of your business in a commercial area, you must:

- have a ground floor business in the city of Port Phillip
- if a tenant, have written approval from property owner, body corporate and/or managing agent
- develop garden beds to compliment the character of the street
- complete an online agreement to register your nature strip garden
- for a raised planter box apply for a permit using the link above.

You should also talk to your neighbours about your plans to plant the nature strip in front of your business.

Dial before you Dig

Services are above and below the nature strip. Contact “Dial Before You Dig”, (freecall 1100 or online <https://www.1100.com.au/>) to locate any underground services before commencing any digging and excavation.

Safety and accessibility

Safety and accessibility must be maintained on all streets. The following clearances and plant heights are required so that:

- everyone can safely travel on the footpath
- people driving can see people walking and cycling
- people can get out of a car parked on the street
- workers can safely access service pits
- there is space for bins and rubbish collection
- a safe street environment that maintains good surveillance, light and access is maintained.

Clearance areas

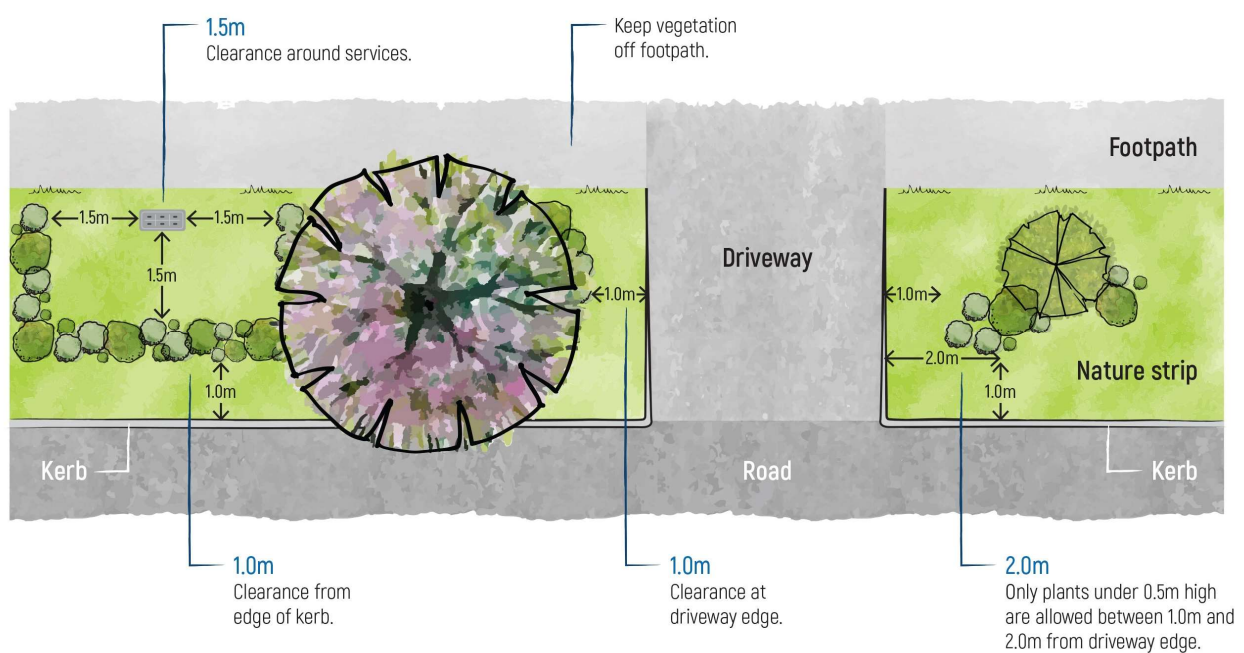


Figure 1 Clearances from driveways, kerbs, footpaths and service pits

Minimum clearances for nature strip planting. Keep plants:

- 1m from the edge of the kerb
- 1.5m around service pits
- 1.0m from the edge of a driveway
- under 0.5m high within 2m of a driveway.

Keep an area on the nature strip adjacent to the kerb to put rubbish bins for weekly collection.

Plant heights

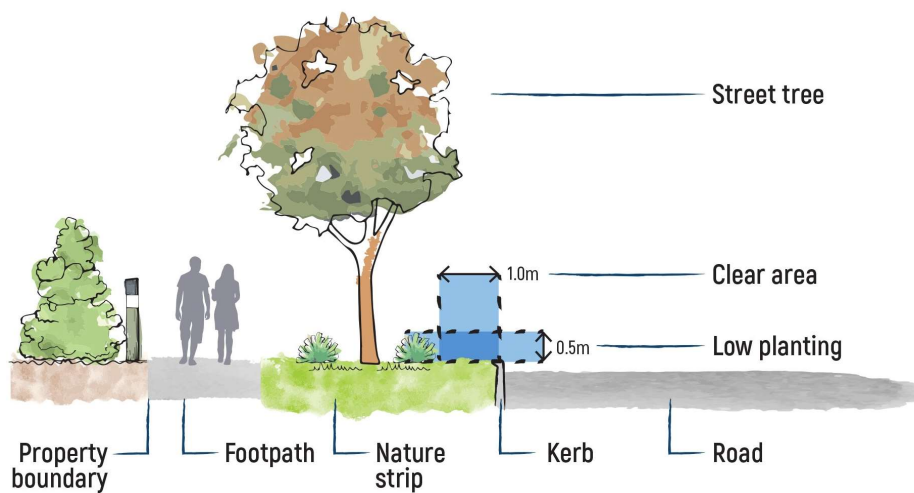


Figure 2 Plants growing up to 0.5m high can be grown provided minimum clearances are met

Plants growing up to 0.5m high can be planted in nature strips if clearances from driveways, kerb, footpath and services are maintained.

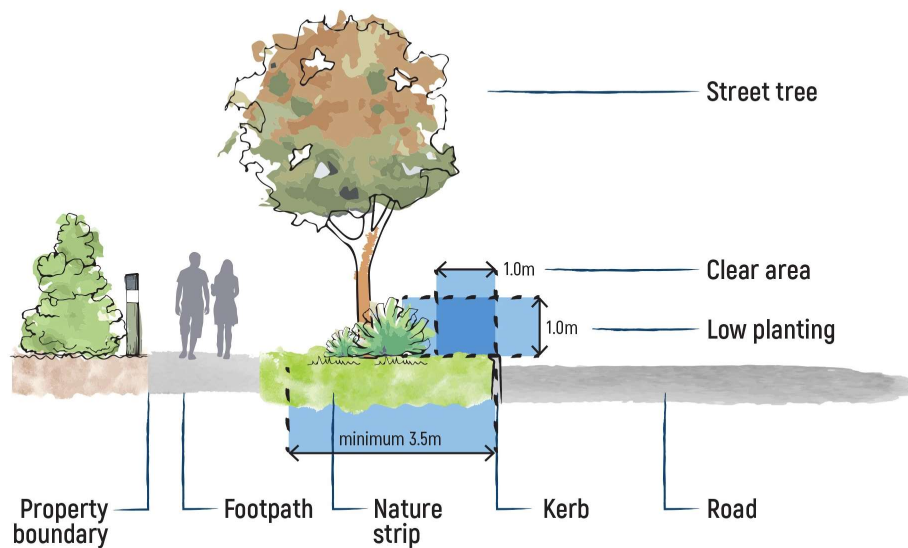


Figure 3 Plants growing up to 1m high can be grown with additional clearances

Plants growing up to 1m high can be planted if the nature strip is greater than 3.5m wide and must be set back a minimum of 1m from the kerb and kept at least 2m from a driveway.

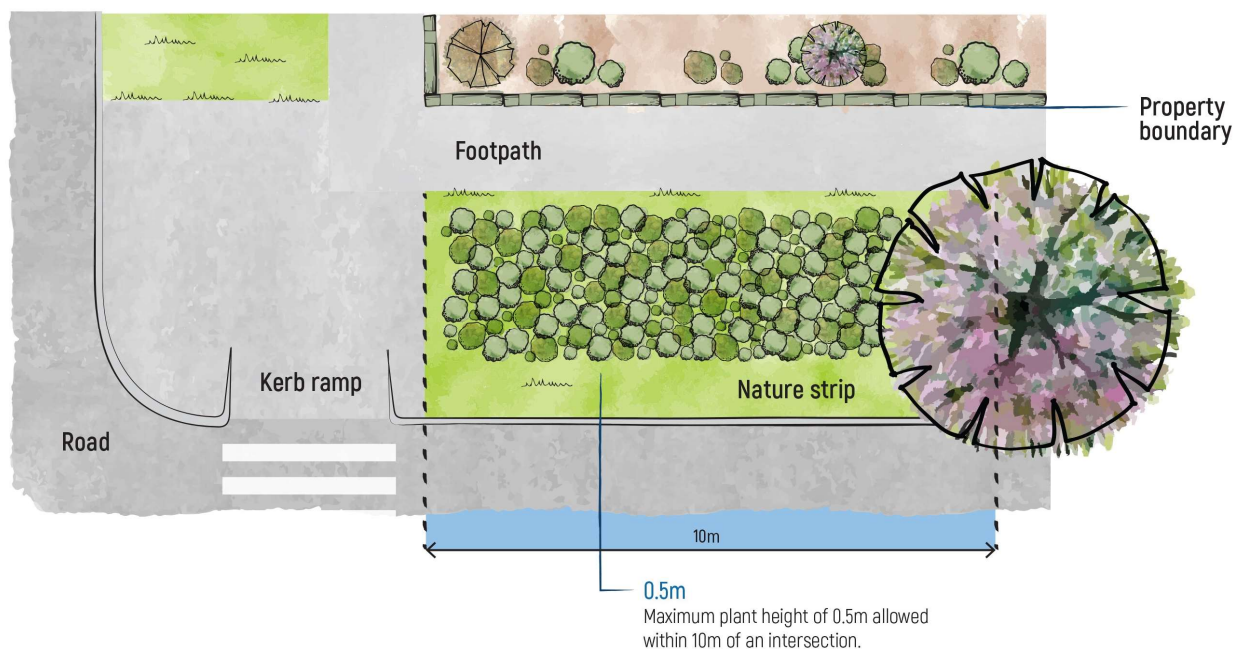


Figure 4 Plants under 0.5m high only can be grown within 10m of pedestrian crossings, corners and intersections

Plants must be less than 0.5m high within 10m of an intersection, pedestrian crossing or signalised intersection.

Raised planter boxes

Raised planter boxes are allowed on residential nature strips if the area between the property boundary and the kerb is over 3.1m wide. The minimum width provides adequate clearances on the footpath and from the road, and allows space for a 0.6m wide planter box.

Businesses wishing to install planter boxes will need to apply for a permit
<https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/council-services/business-in-port-phillip/business-permits/footpath-trading-permit>.

Residents do not need to apply for a permit to install a planter box.

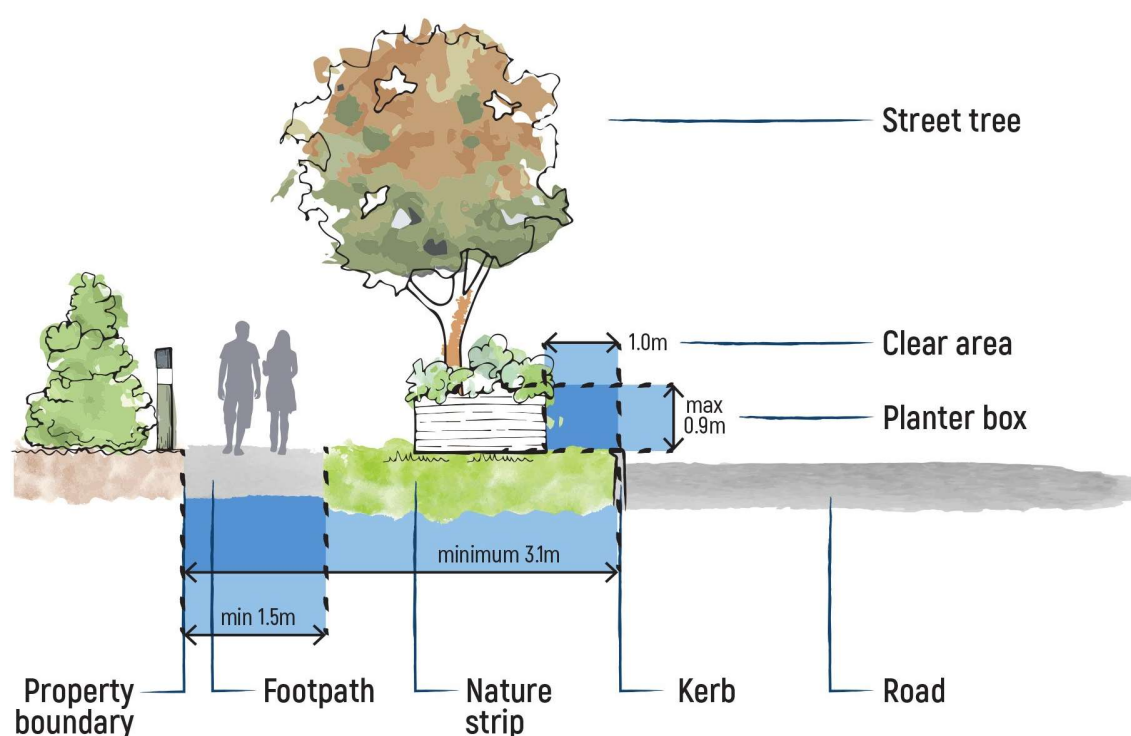


Figure 5 Raised planter boxes

The standards for a raised planter box are:

- Planter boxes must be placed outside the residential property occupied by the nature strip gardener.
- A 1m clearance from the edge of the kerb and 1.5m clear footpath area must be maintained.
- They must not be affixed to any footpath, building, street furniture, pole or other structure.
- Planter boxes must have a minimum height of 0.3m, be no higher than 0.9m and no longer than 1.8m.
- Planter boxes must be located a minimum 1.0m away from tree trunks.
- On a grass surface, a geotextile layer (tough fabric designed to retain soil, available from hardware stores) must be placed at the bottom of the planter box to prevent soil and debris flowing out of the planter box.
- On an asphalt, concrete or paved surface the planter box must have a sealed bottom to prevent soil and debris flowing out of the planter box and to maintain the pavement surface.

There may be additional requirements for planter boxes if you live in an area with a Heritage Overlay or in an area on the Victorian Heritage Register. Visit the webpage <https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/planning-and-building/where-do-i-start/heritage-advice> to check. Please contact City of Port Phillip for extra information if this applies to you.

Edible gardens

Raised planter boxes with clean soil must be installed if growing edible plants. Many Industrial pollutants are present in urban soils, including heavy metals like lead. Lead and other contaminants can transfer to edible plants and is a health hazard.

Healthy street trees

Benefits of trees

Healthy street trees have many benefits. Trees:

- provide shade and shelter for people walking and cycling
- harbour urban wildlife including bees, birds, butterflies
- cool the street and surrounding properties in hot weather, lowering energy use
- provide a comfortable environment and a buffer separating the road from footpaths and buildings
- provide sense of place and contribute to the aesthetics and character of the street.

Tree health

Keeping a non-planted area around the trunk ensures the structural roots stay healthy. These roots hold up the tree. Trees could be impacted by planting in the following ways:

- Tree roots could be damaged by digging under the tree canopy.
- Planting under a tree can reduce access to water and soil nutrients for the tree.
- Increasing the soil level under a tree changes the amount of water the tree can access and could make it stressed.
- Extra soil raised around the tree trunk can cause decay and dead spots on the lower trunk and major roots.

To keep street trees healthy:

- For small trees - keep plants a minimum of 1.5m from the trunk.
- For big trees (with a trunk diameter of 300mm at 1m above the ground) - give the tree a bit more space and keep plants 2.5m away.
- Keep the ground surface as close to the existing level as possible, avoid mounding soil or raising the depth of the nature strip garden bed for the full area below the tree.
 - Do not excavate soil under the branch/leaf canopy of the tree (the drip line).
 - Keep mulch and grass clippings away from tree trunks.
 - Add a 75mm deep layer of mulch to area around the tree, keeping mulch away from the trunk, to keep moisture in the soil.

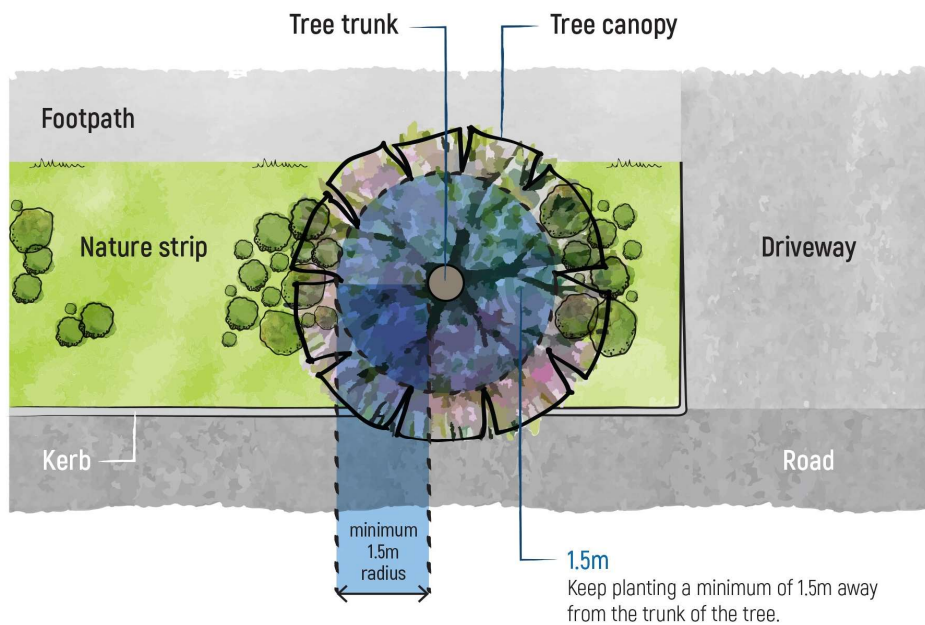


Figure 6 Plant 1.5m away from tree trunks

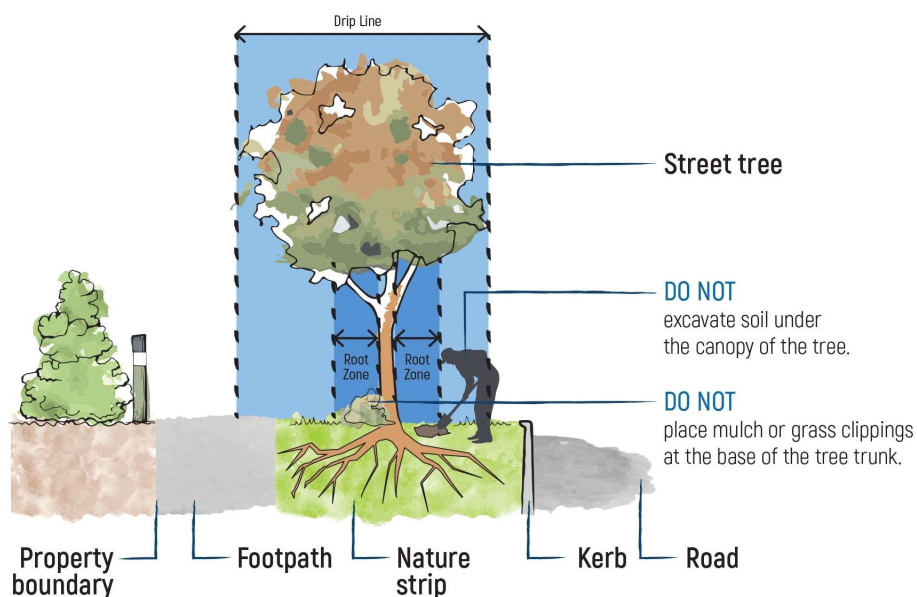


Figure 7 Extra care is required in the drip line (under the tree canopy) and in the root zone (1.5m from the trunk) of trees

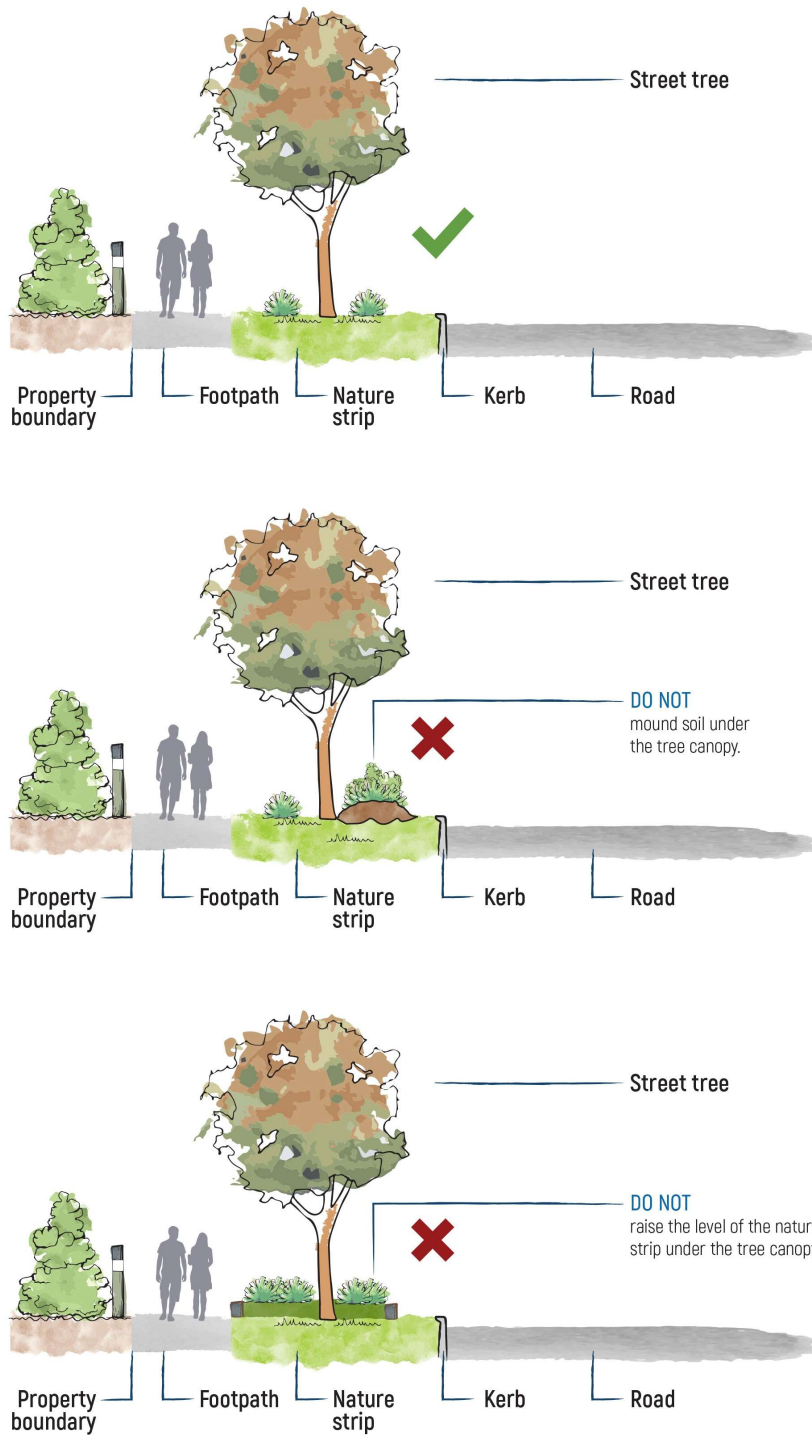


Figure 8 Maintain the existing ground level under trees. Do not mound soil or add raised garden beds



City of Port Phillip **Nature Strip Guidelines**

If the tree needs pruning contact City of Port Phillip for a qualified arborist to carry out any work. Please do not prune street trees yourself. You can contact council for tree pruning using My Port Phillip or Snap Send Solve an Issue, using the link <https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/contact-us>. Additional information about street tree health is available on our website: <https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/council-services/trees-and-vegetation/maintaining-trees-in-our-city>.

Your safety

Plan to garden safely on your nature strip. When gardening:

- Keep the footpath clear. Do not leave tools or garden supplies on the footpath and keep tools where they cannot be tripped over.
- Access the nature strip from the property boundary edge, not the road.
- Consider wearing a hi-vis vest or other light coloured, reflective clothing.
- Minimise the risk of soil contaminants by wearing protective equipment including gloves, a face mask and protective clothing (for example, long sleeved shirt and long pants) when digging in soil on nature strips. Remove shoes and protective clothing and wash hands outside to avoid spreading soil into your home.

What is Not Permitted in a Nature Strip Garden?

For safety and protection of Council assets and infrastructure, you cannot:

- remove asphalt/pavements
- install synthetic turf
- install letterboxes, furniture, community libraries, irrigation, rocks, concrete/paved paths, fencing, barriers, retaining walls, low garden edging, play equipment including swings or tree houses
- connect anything to trees, including signs, bird houses, swings or treehouses
- trim, prune or remove a street tree, or plant a tree
- remove a council asset including seats, signs or garden beds
- include anything that will obstruct the safe flow and vision of people walking or riding bikes and people driving
- plant in the median strip (grass/treed area in the middle of a road) or a round-about. If you think the median strip or round-about near your house could be planted, contact the City of Port Phillip.



Public works

One of the risks of planting in public space is that your nature strip garden may be moved or removed or damaged if capital, upgrade or service works occur in the area. If this occurs, the garden bed will be reinstated with grass. Any additional planting would be at the resident's cost.

While we will always endeavour to notify of council managed works in the area, emergency works or works by service authorities may occur with no notice, and their works will commonly cause impact as they usually require access to underground services such as water, gas, electricity, sewer, stormwater and communications.

Getting permission

Residents do not need a permit to plant a nature strip garden. Instead, the City of Port Phillip asks residents to complete an online nature strip garden registration, which includes an agreement to garden in accordance with the Nature Strip Guidelines (this document). Please complete the agreement and register your nature strip garden on the council web portal. Registering is fast and free. Please follow the link to register your garden [<link>](#). If you cannot register online yourself, please contact City of Port Phillip's customer service in person or via telephone for assistance.

For a businesses installing raised planter boxes, a permit is required. Please contact our Footpath Trading team via the website: <https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/council-services/business-in-port-phillip/business-permits/footpath-trading-permit> .

Compliance and Maintenance

Nature strip gardens are in Council managed public space and they need to be maintained by residents/business owners in a safe and presentable manner.

If your nature strip garden or planter box is not maintained or poses a safety hazard, City of Port Phillip will issue a notice for you to maintain your nature strip garden.

If no action is taken by the resident within two weeks, Council will remove the nature strip garden.

If the garden is causing a safety hazard, Council may take immediate action to make the area safe without notifying the resident.

Planting Tips

Landscaping materials such as mulch, soil, and sand should be sourced from suppliers who will certify products are free of pests or diseases. To do this, purchase supplies from businesses accredited with the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA).

Plant list of suitable plants including indigenous (local) plants and biodiversity can be found on our website: <https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/people-and-community/sustainability-action/protecting->

[plants-and-animals](#), along with additional options for community gardening:
<https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/people-and-community/community-gardens> .

A list of suggested plants for can be found on our website:

<https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/media/ekqli05y/recommended-plant-species-list.pdf>

Relevant policy, regulations or legislation

Road Safety Act 1986 (Victoria)

Road Management Act 2004 (Victoria)

Local Law No 1 (Community Amenity) 2013 (City Of Port Phillip)