



# Manningham Council Nature Strip Guide



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MANNINGHAM

# CONTENTS

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1	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	2
2	<b>PURPOSE</b> .....	2
3	<b>DEFINITION</b> .....	2
4	<b>GUIDE STATEMENT</b> .....	3
	4.1 Manningham Council .....	3
	4.2 Residents/Property Owners .....	3
	4.3 Utility and Public Transport Providers .....	3
5	<b>STREET TREES</b> .....	3
	5.1 Street Tree Planting.....	3
	5.2 Resident Planted Trees .....	4
	5.3 Street Tree Management .....	4
6	<b>WHAT'S ALLOWED?</b> .....	5
	6.1 Grassed Nature Strip .....	5
	6.2 Native Grass Nature Strip .....	5
	6.3 Planting With Ground Covers.....	6
7	<b>BEFORE UNDERTAKING WORKS</b> .....	7
8	<b>WHAT'S NOT ALLOWED?</b> .....	8
9	<b>SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES</b> .....	9
10	<b>EXISTING LANDSCAPED NATURE STRIPS</b> .....	9
11	<b>MANAGING RISK &amp; SAFETY</b> .....	10
12	<b>SCOPE OF THIS GUIDE</b> .....	10
13	<b>FURTHER INFORMATION</b> .....	10
14	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> .....	11
15	<b>RELATED POLICIES &amp; STRATEGIES</b> .....	11
16	<b>RELATED LEGISLATION</b> .....	11
17	<b>DOCUMENT HISTORY</b> .....	12



# REGISTER

Nature Strip Guide	
Classification	Guide
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Responsible Service Unit	Parks & Natural Environment
Authorised by	Council
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*This Guide is part of a suite of guides and policies adopted by Council or the Executive Management Team (EMT).*

*New or replacement guides and policies can be created and developed within service units but can only be added to Council's Policy Register by Governance Services following the approval of the policy by Manningham Council or the EMT.*

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## Nature strips play an important role within Manningham.

Nature strips provide a critical space for services such as water, gas, and power. They play a vital role in providing green space which contributes to the overall amenity of the municipality providing an opportunity for planting of trees and other vegetation with significant benefits from an urban forest perspective. Also, nature strips planted with low growing indigenous and native plants can provide opportunities to support and enhance local biodiversity. This is particularly relevant in streets which form connections to natural bushland areas and local waterways.

Manningham Council is required to provide a safe environment to all, and minimise potential risks associated with landscaping nature strips. Council is, however, willing to work with residents and property owners who are considering alternative treatments to traditional grassed nature strips.

## 2 PURPOSE

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To specify Manningham Council's requirements in relation to the maintenance and use of nature strips within Manningham and ensure the provision of safe and attractive streetscapes.

## 3 DEFINITION

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The nature strip can be defined as an area between a road (except a road related area) and adjacent land but does not include the shoulder of a road or bicycle path, footpath, or shared path.

### **The land is set aside for several purposes including providing space for:**

- Infrastructure services, such as water, sewer, gas, telecommunications, drainage, street lighting, bus stops, street signage and above and below ground power lines.
- Vehicle crossovers and footpaths for the safe movement of pedestrians, prams, and mobility aids.
- The placement of kerbside bins.
- People to safely get into and out of motor vehicles.
- The planting and establishment of street trees by Council.
- Nature strips also need to ensure there is a clear line of sight for the safe movement of pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicle traffic along and across the road corridor, including at driveways, corners and intersections.

## 4 GUIDE STATEMENT

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### Who is responsible for maintenance of nature strips?

#### 4.1 Manningham Council

Whilst Manningham Council is the responsible authority, it does not undertake any renovation or proactive maintenance of nature strips throughout Manningham, however, Council does reserve the right to install infrastructure such as footpaths within the road reserve.

Manningham Council will undertake the planting of nature strip trees and is responsible for the maintenance of street trees in nature strips for the life of the tree.

#### 4.2 Residents/Property Owners

Manningham Council relies on the established community expectation that property owners or residents that inhabit properties with nature strips, maintain the nature strip by undertaking lawn mowing, weeding, litter collection, general leveling and any requirements to maintain an attractive and safe nature strip.

Where a property owner fails to maintain a nature strip adjoining the property, Manningham Council may arrange in exceptional circumstances for appropriate maintenance, however, only if the condition of the nature strip is considered to be a traffic or safety hazard or considered to impact unfavourably and significantly on local amenity.

#### 4.3 Utility and Public Transport Providers

Service providers such as Yarra Valley Water, Melbourne Water, electricity, gas, telecommunication, distribution networks and public transport providers may also require access to the nature strip to inspect, repair or replace services and or infrastructure. This could include the provider removing all vegetation and spoil to access/maintain their asset.

On completion of works, providers are responsible for the reinstatement of the nature strip to its previous condition.

## 5 STREET TREES

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Manningham Council owns and is responsible for the maintenance and management of all trees within nature strips, which necessitates the prohibition of tree planting by adjoining property owners or members of the public.

#### 5.1 Street Tree Planting

Manningham Council has an extensive street and park tree planting program that occurs between May and October each year, although the period can vary to take advantage of optimal planting conditions. Planting is carried out in accordance with the 'Manningham Street Tree Planting Guide 2023' which outlines suitable species for each street throughout Manningham. Community

consultation and engagement about the planting program is provided as part of this strategy. Calling cards are usually dropped in the letter box of residential properties where nature strip plantings have occurred with information about care and maintenance.

To request a tree be planted on a nature strip, please contact Manningham Council's customer service team on (03) 9840 9333 or request online via <https://www.manningham.vic.gov.au/tree-management>. Following a review by Manningham's Proactive Tree Management team, approved nature strip tree plantings will be actioned for the following years planting season wherever possible.

Residents are encouraged to water street trees to encourage the establishment of newly planted trees, especially during the warmer months.



## 5.2 Resident Planted Trees

Residents or property owners are not permitted to plant trees in their nature strip as planted trees may not follow Council considerations and the planted tree stock is often not to the high quality we require and obtain from nurseries. Low quality tree stock can lead to pest and disease complications, poorly developed roots can result in reduced establishment and result in complete tree failure once trees become larger in size. This risk is unacceptable in the public domain.

Where newly planted resident trees are encountered, these will generally be removed. If possible, the resident supplied tree will be put into a pot and left on the resident's property for the resident to plant on their property if they wish. This service may not be possible on all occasions.

## 5.3 Street Tree Management

Manningham Council is responsible for the ongoing inspection and maintenance program relating to all street trees located on Council land including nature strips. Council undertakes cyclic block pruning of trees within the nature strip as per the Manningham Council's 'Tree Management Plan' and 'Electrical Line Clearance Management Plan'.



## 6 WHAT'S ALLOWED?

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Residents and property owners can undertake minor landscaping works to achieve the following:

### 6.1 Grassed Nature Strip

Grassed nature strips are the most common form of nature strip treatment throughout the municipality. The use of drought tolerant warm season grasses, such as Kikuyu, Couch and Soft Leaf Buffalo varieties, provide a low maintenance treatment once established, requiring little to no watering while remaining in good health and condition.

### 6.2 Native Grass Nature Strip

The use of native grasses can provide a lawn like appearance, are drought tolerant and low maintenance and only require periodic weeding and mowing. The species recommended for planting in the list below are indigenous to the area and play an important role in maintaining and enhancing local biodiversity. Information on Manningham local plant species can be found on the Council website at [Protecting plants and ecology | Manningham City Council](https://www.manningham.vic.gov.au/protecting-plants-and-ecology) including a gardening guide to local plants [native splendour - second edition.pdf \(manningham.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.manningham.vic.gov.au/native-splendour-second-edition.pdf).



*Bulbine bulbosa*



*Einadia nutans*



*Microlena stipoides*



*Rytidosperma racemosum*

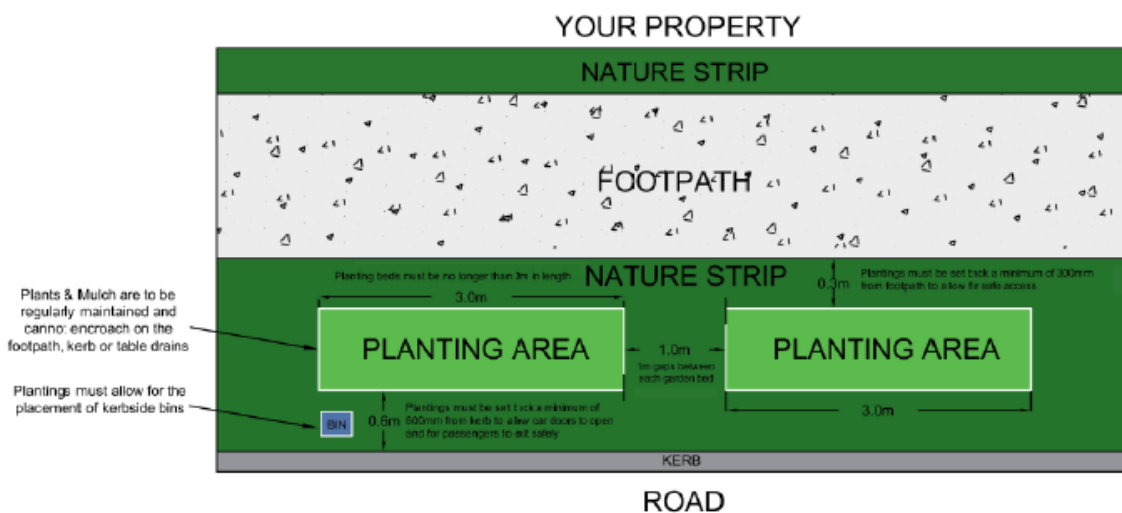
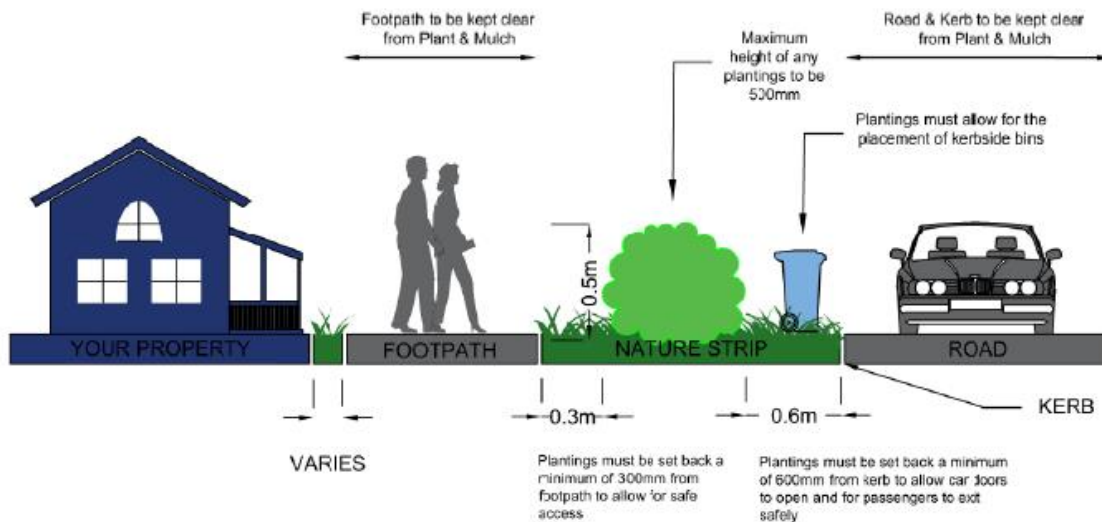
## 6.3 Planting With Ground Covers

The use of native ground covers, wildflowers, low growing shrubs, and grasses in a mulched nature strip can provide an aesthetically pleasing alternative to grass when regularly maintained. Planting nature strips with native and indigenous plants can increase biodiversity by providing essential habitat for native birds, insects and lizards. When planting nature strips with low growing ground covers the following requirements must be met:

- Plants must be maintained and never exceed 500mm in height or obscure safe traffic sightlines.
- Plantings must be set back and maintained minimum of 600mm from the kerb to allow car doors to open and passengers to safely step out of a car.
- Plantings must be set back and maintained 300mm from the footpath to allow safe access along the footpath.
- Planting beds must be no longer than 3m in length with 1m gaps maintained between each garden bed.
- Garden edging is NOT allowed unless it's a spade dug edge. No hard edging such as sleepers, steel, plastic or wooded, e.g., jarrah edging.
- Set back areas must be landscaped with grass to allow a flat surface for safe access of pedestrians including wheelchairs, strollers, and any other pedestrian transport.
- Nature strips on corner properties are restricted to low growing ground cover plantings only to a maximum height of 300mm.
- Plants and mulch are to be regularly maintained and cannot encroach on the footpath, kerb, or table drains.
- Plantings must allow for the placement of kerbside bins.
- Fire hydrants, plugs and service pits must be kept clear and accessible for relevant authorities.

Should the nature strip planting not meet the above requirements, Council will request that the resident/property owner remove or make the appropriate adjustments to meet the above requirements. Council also reserves the right to undertake works to ensure compliance including the removal of vegetation as decided by the relevant Council delegated officer.





## 7 BEFORE UNDERTAKING WORKS

Underground services are to be located prior to any work commencing. Call 'Before You Dig Australia (BYDA)' on 1100 to identify service locations.

Locating services prior to commencing work is essential. Failure to locate services can result in serious injury or death and can cause major disruption. The costs of repairs to damaged underground services as a result of nature strip landscaping will be borne by the resident.

Residents and/or property owners can only undertake landscaping works on the nature strip directly in front of their property. Safe public access is required to be maintained (e.g. to enable car doors

to be easily opened) taking into consideration disabled access. Waste and recycle bins must be able to be easily placed on and removed from the nature strip.

Street trees play an important role in providing habitat and shade and reducing daytime surface temperatures. Landscaping must not negatively impact the health and vigour of the street tree. Soil disturbance should be minimised by using hand tools to avoid damaging the root system. The mounding of mulch and ground cover plantings up around the base of street trees should also be avoided.

## 8 WHAT'S NOT ALLOWED?

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Except in special circumstances (see following section) specified and agreed by Council, hard landscaping elements are prohibited within a nature strip, including (but not limited to):

- a. Rocks or pebbles
- b. Crushed rock (scoria/toppings) except on approved vehicle crossings
- c. Bollards
- d. Hard surfaces, such as bricks, pavers, concrete, asphalt, retaining walls, etc.
- e. Bluestone pitchers
- f. Sleepers
- g. Planter boxes
- h. Gate entry pillars and feature entry walls
- i. Fences
- j. Start pickets
- k. Wooden stakes (apart from establishment period outlined in 7.1.4)
- l. Private power and lighting
- m. Concrete and steel edging around trees or garden beds
- n. Letterboxes
- o. Sporting equipment
- p. Ornamental statues
- q. Irrigation
- r. Synthetic turf/grass
- s. Vegetable gardens
- t. Establishment of weed species such as agapanthus (suggestion only for consideration)
- u. Alterations to allow for car parking on nature strips
- v. Any other material which could pose a traffic or safety hazard
- w. Garden edging

Council may require a property owner to remove any prohibited landscaping or other works undertaken within the nature strip.

## 9 SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

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In exceptional circumstances, Manningham Council will consider hard landscaping of nature strips or alternative measures to the 'What's allowed?' section of this guide. An example of this may be a steep incline on the nature strip requiring retaining. Should a resident feel they have an exceptional circumstance, a permit is required from Manningham Council to undertake these works. Permits for special circumstances are issued by Manningham Council's City Infrastructure department.

**Any application for a permit will be assessed on a case-by-case basis having regard to:**

- a. provision of minimum widths for clear, safe and unobstructed pedestrian zones and kerbside zones, as well as consideration for a future footpath if non-existent;
- b. provision of clear, safe and unobstructed sightlines for cyclists, drivers and other road users;
- c. prohibited and recommended plant species; and
- d. maximum height of plants.

**Any property owner granted a permit is responsible for the following:**

- a. the property owner may be required to obtain public liability insurance with the value determined by the significance of the works and evidence of cover provided to Manningham Council on request.
- b. The property owner may be liable for any damage to Manningham Council, third party, or service provider infrastructure including utilities located on, or in, the nature strip, caused by works carried out by them, or on their behalf.
- c. Manningham Council will not provide any financial support for the establishment, and maintenance of any permitted planting is to be met by the property owner.
- d. Manningham Council may require a property owner to remove any planting which has been undertaken without a permit, or which does not comply with the permit conditions, including planting, which is poorly maintained, and to reinstate the nature strip to its previous condition, at the cost of the owner/resident.
- e. Manningham Council and service authorities reserve the right to access existing and future infrastructure assets within a nature strip. The affected area will be reinstated with topsoil and grass seed. Any reinstatement of permitted modified nature strips is the responsibility of the property owner.

## 10 EXISTING LANDSCAPED NATURE STRIPS

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Changes may be required to nature strips that have already been landscaped. This is required to ensure they meet the requirements of these guidelines. In discussions with Manningham Council, any changes to existing landscaped nature strips will be undertaken by the resident or property owner.



In nature strips containing existing indigenous vegetation, the planting or removal of vegetation is prohibited. This is especially likely in the peri-urban areas throughout Manningham, however, exist throughout the entire municipality.

If you are unable to determine if this is the case and want to landscape your nature strip, please contact Manningham Council and an officer will assess the existing vegetation to determine if it is indigenous.

## 11 MANAGING RISK & SAFETY

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Manningham Council is required to provide a safe environment and minimise potential risks associated with landscaping on nature strips. Therefore, Manningham Council will respond to public safety issues to minimise the risk to the community. Manningham Council will work with the relevant resident or property owner to address safety issues due to nature strip landscaping. This includes allowing adequate space for safe access to and from vehicles taking into consideration disability access.

Manningham Council may request the resident/property owner to remove any landscaping feature identified as an immediate public risk. This includes pedestrian trip or fall hazards, obstructions or other hazards which do not adhere to these guidelines.

If the resident or a property owner (including previous occupant or owner) is known by Manningham Council to have undertaken works on the nature strip and does not address non-compliant landscaping, Manningham Council may issue a “Notice to Comply”. This notice will request the specific problem be fixed by an allocated date. Failure to act following a “Notice to Comply” can result in an on-the-spot fine (in the form of an infringement notice). It is also possible that Manningham Council will act in the Magistrates Court by prosecuting the resident or property owner.

It must also be noted that if a safety issue requires immediate action, Manningham Council may undertake removal/rectification works at the expense of the landowner without notice.

## 12 SCOPE OF THIS GUIDE

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This guide relates to all nature strips in Manningham, with the exception of nature strips associated with Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) Declared Roads.

This guide must be read in conjunction with the requirements relating to the protection of Council land and assets in *Manningham’s Community Local Law 2023*.

## 13 FURTHER INFORMATION

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For further information on this guide or to ask any questions relating to the guide, please contact [manningham@manningham.vic.gov.au](mailto:manningham@manningham.vic.gov.au) or call (03)9840 9333.

## 14 RESPONSIBILITY

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- CEO
- Director City Planning
- Director City Services
- Manager City Safety
- Manager Sustainable Futures

## 15 RELATED POLICIES & STRATEGIES

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- Manningham Street Tree Planting Guide 2023
- Manningham Community Local Law 2023
- Manningham Tree Management Plan
- Manningham Electric Line Clearance Management Plan
- Manningham Parking Management Policy 2014
- Manningham Road Management Plan November 2021
- Manningham Infrastructure Green Wedge Design Guide 2013
- Roadside Environmental Management Strategy June 2004
- Roadside Environmental Management Strategy Guidelines June 2004
- Roadside Strategy East Mullum Mullum Map January 2004
- Roadside Strategy West Mullum Mullum Map January 2004

## 16 RELATED LEGISLATION

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- Local Government Act 2020
- Road Management Act 2004
- Road Safety Act 1986
- Electrical Safety Act 1998

# 17 DOCUMENT HISTORY

<b>Policy Title:</b>	Manningham Council Nature Strip Guide
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	
<b>Responsible Officer Position:</b>	
<b>Next Review Date:</b>	
<b>To be included on website?</b>	YES

Last Updated	Meeting type? - Council or EMT	Meeting Date	Item Number



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