

Nature Strip Landscaping Policy – Draft 2026

Date of Adoption			
Adoption Method	☒ Council	☐ CEO	☐ Other (<i>please specify</i>)
CEO Signature			Date
Responsible Officer and Unit	Manager Parks, Civil Services and Resource Recovery		
Nominated Review Period	☐ Annually	☒ Every 4 years	☐ Other (<i>please specify</i>)
Last Endorsement Date	March 2022		
Next Endorsement Date	August 2030		

Macedon Ranges Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land and waterways. Council recognises their living cultures and ongoing connection to Country and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. Council also acknowledges local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents of Macedon Ranges for their ongoing contribution to the diverse culture of our community.

DOCUMENT HISTORY	Version	Date	Author
Initial Draft	1	02/03/2026	S Bloom
Second Draft	2	13/04/2026	S Bloom
Final Draft			
Approval			

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1. Purpose/Objective

The objectives of the Nature Strip Landscaping Policy are to:

- Support and encourage residents to creatively and sustainably contribute to the landscaping and maintenance of nature strips in ways that enhance streetscape character, biodiversity, and community engagement, while maintaining safety and access.
- Clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of Council and the community in relation to nature strip maintenance.
- Support the use of low maintenance, low growing and drought tolerant planting as alternatives to the traditional grassed nature strip, in keeping with the Macedon Ranges' natural environment.
- Achieve environmental and social benefits, including water conservation, habitat enhancement, improved visual amenity, and reduced maintenance.
- Ensure nature strips continue to safely accommodate pedestrian, cycling and vehicle movement, including maintaining safe sight lines at intersections and curves.
- Ensure access is maintained for utility services, postal delivery, fire hydrants, kerbside parking and waste management.
- Support and complement the Nature Strip Landscaping Guidelines

2. Background/ Policy Intent

Macedon Ranges Shire Council (Council) acknowledges that nature strips play an important role in the aesthetics, environmental and social health of the towns and villages within our Shire.

Well-designed and maintained nature strips can contribute to more attractive and walkable streets, support local neighbourhood character, and help reduce urban heat through increased vegetation cover. These outcomes also deliver broader community and economic benefits over time

The Macedon Ranges Shire Council Nature Strip Landscaping Policy (the Policy) provides practical guidance to assist residents in designing, establishing and maintaining nature strips that contribute positively to their local streetscape and environment.

It recognises that residents and landowners may consider alternatives to traditional grassed nature strips and provides direction on their appropriate design and maintenance..

The Policy also acknowledges the impacts of climate change and supports low water-use and low maintenance alternatives to traditional grassed nature strips, where these are consistent with the character of the Macedon Ranges' natural environment. Nature strips also serve an important function as access corridors for utility services

Council supports residents to landscape their nature strips in ways that align with this Policy and the accompanying Guidelines to ensure their underlying purpose and the ongoing safety of the general public is maintained.

This Policy supersedes the Nature Strip Landscaping Policy 2022.

3. Terminology

The following key terms are used throughout this Policy and should be read in conjunction with the Definitions Table at Section 16.

3.1 Nature strip

Nature strips are set aside to provide one or more of the following uses:

- to accommodate utility services such as power and light poles, water supply, sewer or storm water pipe, gas supply mains, underground communication and electrical infrastructure and footpaths;
- to allow for door opening space and facilitate pedestrian movement between the road and the footpath;
- to allow pedestrian access along a street where there is no footpath;
- where possible to provide a space for the location of household garbage, recycling and green waste bins;
- to provide visibility of and for motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians at intersections, curves in the road, and near driveways;
- to provide space for the provision of street tree planting.

3.2 Town

A town boundary can be generally defined as where the road speed zone changes to within or below 60km per hour.

The streetscape character varies between, and even within, towns such as the width of the streets, type of road edging or drainage infrastructure. Streets may or may not contain a footpath but have a nature strip between the road and the property boundary.

3.3 Rural Roadsides

Rural roadsides/reserves are outside town boundaries. These have different functions and values to town nature strips and often contain remnant native vegetation that supports biodiversity and habitat. Native vegetation occurring within rural roadsides is protected and removal/re-planting is not permitted without a Planning or Local Laws permit. Refer to Council's *Roadside Conservation Management Plan* for further information.

3.4 Town native nature strips

This vegetation provides a buffer between natural and introduced vegetation and also serves an important environmental function by providing habitat links.

Native vegetation within town native nature strips is protected and removal/re-planting is considered prohibited unless approved under special conditions and with a Planning or Local Laws permit.

3.5 Heritage nature strips

These nature strip plantings generally reflect the patterns of settlement, connect us with our past, and contribute significantly to the local character of the town.

Heritage nature strips are protected, and removal/re-planting is not permitted - unless under special circumstances and with Planning approval.

3.6 Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD)

WSUD is an engineered environmental design approach to provide water quality treatment, flood management, and reduce pollution from entering our waterways.

Nature strips which incorporate the principles of WSUD include swales and rain gardens and must be maintained in accordance with the design intent. Removal/re-planting is not permitted unless under special circumstances and with Planning approval.

3.7 Coordinating Road Authority (CRA)

Council is the CRA for most local roads, including service roads.

The CRA for arterial roads (other than service roads) is VicRoads. Aside from regular maintenance activities on an arterial road nature strip, including mowing, weeding and picking up litter, all other activities carried out on an arterial road may be considered “works” under the Road Management Act 2004 and will require a “Works within the Road Reserve Permit” from VicRoads.

3.8 Arterial Road

These are high-capacity, main roads that connect traffic between town centres or one existing arterial road to another. To determine if a road is an arterial road visit ‘Maps of declared roads’ at the VicRoads website or [Map of Declared Roads](#).

4. Scope

4.1 Areas within the scope of this Policy

This Policy only applies to the landscaping of a nature strip on a Council managed road or street in a town.

4.2 Areas not covered by this Policy (exclusions)

This Policy does not apply to the following areas:

- Nature strips on arterial roads (other than service roads)
- Rural roadside /reserves
- Town native, Heritage or WSUD nature strips
- Roundabouts or road median strips

Residents who are unsure whether their nature strip is covered by this Policy can contact Council to confirm.

5. Governing Legislation

5.1 Community Local Law 2023 (or as amended)

This Policy must be read in conjunction with the requirements of Macedon Ranges Council Community Local Law ('the Local Law').

The Local Law sets out requirements for the use of Council land and roads, including obtaining a permit for certain uses and activities. Under Clause (13) of the Local Law a person must obtain a permit to carry out any works in the nature strip, including excavating, digging holes, or otherwise remove, damage, destroy, interfere with, alter, affix to or tap into a Council asset.

The Local Law includes a clause (18) to outline a permit exemption in accordance with this Nature Strip Landscaping Policy:

(18.) Planting on Nature Strips

Unless acting in accordance with Council's Naturestrip Landscaping Policy as shown on Council's website, a person must not, without a permit, on a naturestrip:

- (a) plant or remove any vegetation (excluding the mowing of non-native grass);*
- (b) undertake any landscaping; or*
- (c) remove any soil.*

Residents within Macedon Ranges Shire are not required to obtain a permit to landscape the nature strip adjoining their property where works comply with this Policy and accompanying Guidelines. Where proposed landscaping does not comply, a permit must be obtained under Council's Community Local Law 2023. Further information on permit applications is available on Council's website

6. Nature Strip Responsibility

The CRA is responsible for the management of nature strips; however, it does not undertake any renovation or routine maintenance, including mowing, weeding, fertilising, mulching, removing rubbish, fallen leaves, sticks and bark, trimming edges, topping up soil levels or repairing tyre damage - which is expected to be carried out by the adjoining property resident.

Council is responsible for the planting and maintenance of street trees within nature strips.

Ongoing maintenance of a modified and landscaped nature strip is the responsibility of the owner (or tenant), or any subsequent owners of the property for the life of the landscape. Where a new resident does not wish to retain or cannot maintain a previously modified nature strip, they may reinstate the nature strip with natural turf grass.

Utility companies are obligated to reinstate the nature strip following maintenance work but are not required to reinstate nature strips that have been modified and landscaped with anything other than grass (soil and seed).

7. Requirements for Landscaping Nature Strips

Council encourages residents to enhance their nature strips in a safe, low-maintenance and environmentally sustainable way. Nature strips may be landscaped where works comply with the following requirements, ensuring they are safe, functional and contribute positively to the broader streetscape:

- The location must be within the Scope of this Policy - refer to Section 4 Scope.
- Maintain a minimum clearance of one (1) metre from the back of kerb, or one (1) metre from the back of table drains where no kerb and channel exist. This area must remain free of plantings to allow safe vehicle access and placement of waste and recycling bins.
- Where no existing footpath is present, maintain a minimum clear width of 1.8 metres for pedestrian access and service deliveries.
- Select plants that grow to no more than 600 mm in height. On corner blocks, only ground cover plants to a maximum height of 250 mm are permitted within ten (10) metres of an intersection to maintain sightlines for motorists and pedestrians.
- Locate plants to ensure mature growth and mulch do not encroach onto footpaths, maintaining safe and accessible pedestrian movement at all times.

Comply with the permitted and non-permitted items set out in Section 8.

8. Permitted Items on Nature strips

8.1 Appropriate Plants

Residents may select from a range of drought-tolerant and low-maintenance plants to landscape their nature strips, including native species, to enhance biodiversity and complement the local streetscape. Suitable plant types include shrubs, ground covers, grasses and bulbs that are drought and frost tolerant and grow to less than 600 mm in height.

Plants that are well-suited to the Macedon Ranges natural environment, including some exotics, are recommended however locally native plants (indigenous) are the preferred type. Native indigenous plants provide a usable habitat for birds, small reptiles and insects, and increase biodiversity within the Shire.

Residents who wish to grow vegetables on their nature strips as an alternative to landscaping are encouraged to in a sustainable way that protects the surrounding environment. This can be achieved by limiting high inputs such as irrigation, fertilisers or pesticides and ensuring materials used are suitable near gutters and storm water drains (and not in the Section 9 Non-permitted Items on Nature Strips list on the following page).

More information about native plants of the Macedon Ranges and suitable plants for food growing on the verge is available on Council's website and at Customer Service Centres. Council officers can also provide plant advice as required.

8.2 Grass/Turf

Traditionally nature strips have been turfed or grassed. Guidelines on how to establish a grassed nature strip and information on suitable grass varieties are available in the Macedon Ranges Nature Strip Landscaping Guidelines.

8.3 Permeable Surfaces

The following mulches and gravels are permitted:

- Wood chips or gravel between 7mm to 25mm in size, to a depth of 75mm, natural in colour, and in conjunction with plantings only – to discourage illegal parking
- Fine gravel mulches, such as granitic sand or toppings to a maximum depth of 100mm may be used for areas that are required to be kept clear - see Section 7, and must be well compacted.

Where a gravel or wood chip mulch is used on the nature strip:

- It is not permitted to encroach onto the footpath, driveways, roadways or into the kerb and channel
- The level of the mulch must not extend above the level of the footpath or kerb

- The mulch on the nature strip must be maintained at a reasonable level and in a weed free condition.

9. Non-permitted Items on Nature Strips

In addition to any item which an Authorised Officer of Macedon Ranges Shire Council considers may constitute a risk, items that must not be installed or which are not permitted as part of landscaping the nature strip include:

- bluestone pitchers, railway sleepers or retaining walls
- objects and/or barriers such as fencing, large rocks, logs, or bollards
- garden edging that protrudes above the nature strip or footpath level
- shredded plant products such as compost, pea straw or fine wood chips (other than that specified in Section 8.3 of this policy) or similar
- scoria, any other loose materials that can enter and obstruct storm water drains
- fertilisers or garden sprays that may wash into storm water drains
- spiny, thorny, or artificial plants
- plants with an aggressive root system
- noxious or environmental weed species. Information regarding common weeds in the Macedon Ranges can be found on Council's website [artificial turf](#) ¹
- irrigation systems
- hard paving such as concrete, brick or asphalt
- temporary or permanent electrical wiring, including tree lights
- timber or metal stakes, or star pickets.

¹ The use of synthetic turf is not encouraged throughout Macedon Ranges Shire Council due to the adverse effect it has on the environment. It may only be installed on nature strips in exceptional circumstances and an application for a permit must be approved prior.

9.1 Car parks on nature strips

Parking is not permitted on nature strips under State law, irrespective of the surface used. This is to protect Utility services, Council assets, and is law under the *Victorian Road Safety Road Rules*, 2017.

9.2 Fire Hydrant Visibility

Any modifications to the nature strip must not cover, obscure or hide any fire hydrant or their marker posts. Fire Hydrants must remain accessible at all times.

9.3 New Street Trees

Residents are not permitted to supply or plant new trees on the nature strip. Council is responsible for the planting and maintenance of street trees within nature strips.

If a resident requires a street tree in the nature strip, a request can be made to Council's Arboriculture Unit. The planting of street trees is subject to the requirements of Macedon Ranges Shire Council's Tree Management Policy.

9.4 Existing Street Trees

Residents are not permitted to prune or modify existing trees on the nature strip in any way (other than watering or mulching). Requests may be made to Council if pruning is required.

Any digging or cultivation within the nature strip for landscaping must be by hand only i.e. no mechanical excavation. Vegetation should not be planted within a metre (1.0m) from the base of any existing tree as it will compete for moisture and nutrients. Any mulch installed on the nature strip must be kept back from the trunk of existing trees to prevent collar rot.

9.5 Utilities and maintenance work

Council and utility companies that supply water, gas, electricity, sewerage, drainage and telecommunications may occasionally require access to the nature strip to carry out repairs and/or maintenance work. The utility companies are required to reinstate the nature strip following maintenance work but are not required to reinstate residential nature strips that have been modified and landscaped other than in grass (soil and seed).

Council and utility companies or maintenance contractors will not be responsible to replace plants, landscaping, or any other modifications made to the nature strip, to the condition existing prior to maintenance work.

10. Nature Strip Maintenance

Nature strips landscaped in accordance with this Policy must be kept in a well maintained and safe condition by the resident at all times by:

- regularly mowing all grassed areas
- ensuring that plants are pruned and mulches are contained so that they do not extend onto pathways, driveways, roadways or over the kerb
- keeping plants (other than street trees) to a height of no more than 600mm at all times
- maintaining the nature strip in a neat and safe condition - free of weeds and rubbish, any tripping hazards, and any protruding objects.

11. Failure to Maintain a Nature Strip

Council retains the right to request the rectification of a modified or landscaped nature strip where a resident fails to maintain it in accordance with this policy and the following:

- the condition of the nature strip is a traffic or pedestrian hazard
- it does not provide appropriate pedestrian access
- it is a safety or fire hazard
- it interferes with the visibility of motorists, cyclists and pedestrians at intersections, curves in the road and near driveways
- it impacts unfavourably and significantly on the local amenity as described in Point 9.
- it contains noxious or environmental weed species.

The resident will be given a fair and reasonable time to rectify the works unless the level of risk warrants a more timely response.

In instances where the property owner does not comply with Council's requests, an Authorised Officer may enforce the requirements of this Policy as a Notice to Comply under the Community Local Law 2023.

If the resident fails to observe the requirements of a Local Law Notice to Comply, the Macedon Ranges Shire Council will take action to remove the landscaping and reinstate the nature strip to a safe and tidy condition. All costs in these instances, will be charged to the property owner.

12. Safety and Liability

During landscaping or maintenance works on the nature strip, the person conducting the works has a duty of care under common law to take all reasonable measures to prevent accident or injury to persons carrying out the works and also to members of the public using the road or footpath.

The resident should confirm with their insurer they have adequate Public Liability insurance to allow for any claims that may arise as a result of any modification or landscaping of the nature strip.

Residents must contact "Dial Before You Dig" or visit the website <https://www.byda.com.au/>, (a free national service) to determine the presence of any underground services before commencing any excavation to the nature strip. Any excavation for landscaping the nature strip must be carried out by hand, not machinery, to minimise any potential damage to existing street trees or infrastructure.

Council will not be liable for any financial penalties that the resident incurs from damaging any underground services.

Council accepts no occupational health, safety or public liability related to works carried out on the nature strip by residents.

13. Landscaping Nature Strips – Steps for Residents

Residents are required to take the following steps when planning new landscaping within a nature strip:

1. Residents must confirm their nature strip is permitted to be landscaped under this Policy – Refer to section 4 Scope.
2. If renting, tenants must gain the prior approval of the property owner or management body
3. Refer to section 7. Requirements for Landscaping Nature Strips and the accompanying Nature strip Landscaping Guidelines
4. Consider at the planning phase:
 - > the suitability of the design
 - > if it complements the neighbourhood character
 - > whether it suits the streetscape.
5. Conduct a Dial Before You Dig prior to any excavation <https://www.byda.com.au>
6. Confirm the works can be carried out in a safe manner
7. Consider the ability to maintain the landscaping in a safe and tidy condition in the long term.

14. Review

This Policy will be reviewed every four (4) years, or more frequently if required in response to regulatory changes, Council priorities, operational needs, or safety considerations.

15. Gender Impact Assessment

In accordance with the Gender Equality Act 2020, a Gender Impact Assessment has been conducted in relation to the subject matter of this report. *A summary of the findings and recommendation of the assessment will be inserted here on completion.*

16. Definitions

Term	Definition
Nature strip	As defined in the Dictionary of Road Safety Road Rules, 2017: <i>“an area between a road (except a road related area) and adjacent land but does not include the shoulder of a road or a bicycle path, footpath or shared path”</i> Note: Sometimes also referred to as the ‘Verge’ in Victoria.
Town	A town is a centre of concentrated population settlement within the surrounding rural district and in planning terms, is area zoned for township land use. These zones include the residential, commercial and industrial zones.
Rural Roadsides	Rural roadsides are road reserves outside town boundaries - the planning zones include rural living, rural conservation, and farming zones. They may contain native or exotic vegetation or a mix of both.
Town native nature strips	Native nature strips are those located within the town boundary that contain existing native vegetation to be protected.
Heritage nature strips	Heritage nature strips contain garden beds that have been historically planted and maintained.
WSUD	Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) is an alternative urban drainage system that integrates water cycle management into the built environment to reduce pollution, manage stormwater, and improve environmental outcomes
CRA	Coordinating Road Authority (the CRA) means the road authority with the responsibility for the management and coordination of works within a particular road or road reserve.
Arterial Road	An arterial road is a high-capacity road, or main road, that connects traffic between town centres or one existing arterial road to another.

17. Related Council Policies, Strategies and Plans

- > Tree Management Policy
- > Asset Protection Policy
- > Statement of Planning Policy
- > Road Management Plan

- > Biodiversity Strategy
- > Environment Strategy
- > Climate Emergency Plan
- > Shire-wide Footpath Plan

18. Related Legislation

- > Road Management Act 2004 (Vic)
- > Road Safety Act 1986 (Vic)
- > Road Safety (Traffic Management) Regulations 2019 (Vic)
- > Road Safety Road Rules 2017 (Vic)
- > Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)
- > Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (Vic)
- > Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (Vic)

19. Related Guidelines and Resources

- > Code of Practice for Worksite Safety – Traffic Management (2023)
- > Code of Practice: Operational Responsibility for Public Roads (2017)
- > Austroads Guide to Temporary Traffic Management (AGTTM) (Parts 1–10)
- > AS 1742.3:2019 Manual of uniform traffic control devices, Part 3
- > Macedon Ranges Nature Strip Landscaping Guidelines (2022)
- > Your Guide to the Weeds of Central Victoria (2024)
- > Flora of the Macedon Ranges: A Bushwalker's Guide (2019)