

# Guideline for Nature Strips

## **OBJECTIVES:**

Provided nature strips are kept in a safe and well-maintained condition for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles; and that there is adequate protection for services (above and below ground), street trees and stormwater management, the City of Launceston will support alternative nature strip plantings and treatments. The purpose of this document is to provide a clear guidance for nature strip management in accordance with the Nature Strip Policy.

## **SCOPE:**

This document is for use by Councillors, employees, residents, planners, developers, contractors and landscapers. It applies to all nature strips within road reserves owned and/or managed by City of Launceston in accordance with the Nature Strip Policy. Nature strip means the unmade area between the edge of the road and adjacent land, but does not include a footpath, bicycle path or shared path.

## **PROCEDURE:**

As per the Nature Strip Policy a resident wishing to replace the grass verge with low maintenance plantings, garden areas or other landscaping treatments must apply in writing to Council for approval prior to undertaking any works. If approval is granted, the City of Launceston will not contribute financially to the cost of the work or its ongoing maintenance, regardless of any change of ownership/occupancy of the adjoining property.

Conditions for plants other than lawn grass and street trees within the nature strip are:

- During installation and 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 footpath or road.
- A "Dial Before You Dig" (<https://www.1100.com.au/>) must be undertaken by the resident prior to works commencing. Services above and below ground may limit the opportunity for alternative plantings and surfacing. Council will not be liable for any financial penalties that a resident incurs from damaging any underground services.
- Council and utility companies that supply water, gas, electricity and telecommunications may from time to time require access to the nature strip to carry out maintenance works. The utility companies are required to reinstate the nature strip following maintenance work, but do so with topsoil and grass seed only. Council or the utility companies will not be responsible for replacing plants or landscaping as a result of such works. Council and utility companies will attempt to advise householders of forthcoming planned work so that plants can be removed if possible.
- Residents are not permitted to plant, prune, damage or remove street trees in accordance with the 26-Plx-005 Tree Management Policy. Damage includes branches, trunk and roots of the tree. Residents can however, make a customer service request for a new, replacement or maintenance of a street tree through Council's customer service centre. The tree species, location and timing of planted will be determined by Council in consultation with the resident.

- For corner blocks a maximum plant height of 250 mm and for all other nature strips maximum height of 600mm.
- To maintain accessibility the minimum distances for plantings are observed:
  - 500 mm from the back of kerb is kept clear of plantings to allow for people to enter and exit their vehicles safely and for bin collection.
  - 500 mm from the edge of a footpath.
  - 1.5 metres from the property line is kept clear to allow for pedestrians, mail and other deliveries.
  - 1.5m clearance around bus stops and between the bus stop and footpaths.
  - 9 metres either side of a minor intersection and 15 metres at a major intersection to ensure a clear line of sight for motorists and pedestrians (measured from kerb, edge of seal or pavement);
  - 2 metres from driveways, drainage pits, service pits and hydrants.
  - 3 metres from power poles, street lights and service wires.
- Plantings do not include Weeds of National Significance, declared weeds under the *Weed Management Act 1999* or environmental weeds within the Launceston municipality. Local low growing native ground covers, shrubs and grasses are preferred however, the character of the suburb and adjoining gardens should also be considered.
- The following mulches and gravels are permitted:
  - Mulches or bark chips 12mm to 25mm in size, to a depth of 75mm.
  - Fine gravel such as compacted washed granitic sand or similar, to a depth of 75mm;Mulch and gravel must remain on the nature strip and not spill onto the footpath, driveways or into the kerb and channel.

The level of the mulch or gravel must not be raised above the level of the footpath or kerb. The mulch or gravel must be maintained in a reasonably level and weed free condition.
- Non-slip path or stepping stones flush with the surrounding surfaces may be considered where linking to existing footpath or back of kerb.
- The following will not permitted on the nature strip except in exceptional circumstances and subject to the approval of the General Manager Infrastructure and Assets Network:
  - Shredded plant products such as pea straw, wood chips and bark, other than that specified above.
  - Rocks or pebbles greater than 7mm diameter.
  - Bluestone pitchers, railway sleepers or retaining walls.
  - Shale.
  - Scoria.
  - Artificial turf.
  - Irrigation systems.
  - Temporary or permanent electrical wiring, including lights.
  - Metal stakes, star pickets or wire; and
  - Hardstand, retaining structures or any other treatment including paving, concrete, brick and asphalt that facilitates vehicle parking will not be approved under the Nature Strip Policy.
- Nature strips modified in accordance with the Nature Strip Policy must be kept in a well maintained in a safe condition by the resident at all times by ensuring:

- Plants are kept to maximum height and minimum distance requirements as specified above.
- Plants and/or mulch do not protrude/spill onto paths, driveways or over the kerb.
- Keeping the nature strip free of weeds, rubbish, trip hazards or protruding objects.

Ongoing maintenance of the nature strip remains the responsibility of the adjoining owner, or any subsequent owners of the property for the life of the landscape.

- The City of Launceston may require the resident to remove any offending parts or the whole planting where a resident fails to maintain a nature strip in accordance with the Nature Strip Policy, these guidelines and for any of the following reasons:
  - the condition of the nature strip is a traffic or pedestrian hazard; or
  - it does not provide appropriate pedestrian access; or
  - it is a safety or fire hazard; or
  - it interferes with the visibility of motorists, cyclists and pedestrians at intersections, curves in the road and near driveways; or
  - where weed species have been allowed to flourish; or
  - it impacts unfavourably and significantly on the local amenity.

If Council considers that the state of the nature strip creates an imminent risk to users of the nature strip or adjacent road/s, that it limits or prevents access and appropriate use of the nature strip or that the vision of motorists and cyclists is affected, Council may take immediate action to remove the landscaping and reinstate the nature strip to a safe condition. The cost of maintenance or reinstatement will be charged to the resident.

- In the event a new resident does not wish to retain or cannot maintain a previously modified nature strip, they may request Council to reinstate the nature strip with seeded turf grass at the new resident's cost.
- Retrospective approval for nature strips modified prior to endorsing this policy is not required unless deemed unsafe by Council or there is a failure to maintain the alternative plantings and surfacing in accordance with the above guidelines.

#### **RELATED POLICIES & PROCEDURES:**

26-Plx-019 Nature Strip Policy

26-Plx-005 Tree Management Policy

26-Fmx-042 Special needs nature strip mowing services for people with incapacities or permanent injuries form.

#### **RELATED LEGISLATION:**

*Electricity Wayleaves and Easements Act 2000*

*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

*Building Act 2016*

*Building Regulations 2016*

*Fire Services Act 1995*

*Forest Practices Act 1985*

*Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995*

*Local Government Act 1993*

*Local Government (Highways) Act 1982*

*Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*

*Nature Conservation Act 2002*

*Road Rules 2019*  
*Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*  
*Water Management Act 1999*  
*Water and Sewerage Industry Act 2008*  
*Weed Management Act 1999*  
*Urban Drainage Act 2015*

**REFERENCES:**

*Australian Standard 4373-2007: Australian Standard for Pruning of Amenity Trees.*  
*Australian Standard 4970-2009: Protection of Trees on Development Sites.*

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Nature Strip:** means the unmade area between the edge of the road and adjacent land, but does not include a bicycle path, footpath or shared path.

**Tree:** Long lived woody perennial plant generally with one or relatively few main stems or trunks.

**REVIEW:**

This procedure will be reviewed no more than 2 years after the date of approval (version) or more frequently, if dictated by operational demands.