

NATURE STRIP PLANTING POLICY 2014

Date of Adoption: October 2014
Effective Date: October 2014

1. Purpose

The City of Canada Bay is committed to improving the sustainability of the local government area. Recognising the impacts of climate change and drought on gardening and landscaping, this Policy allows residents to have a sustainable approach to nature strips. The Policy has been developed to assist residents with the management of their adjoining nature strips. The objective of the Policy is to assist residents with the management and maintenance of nature strips and road verges adjacent to their property.

2. Benefits of Nature Strips

Planted nature strips have a number of benefits to the local environment and wider community. The planting of nature strips with drought tolerant turf or appropriate native plant species has a number of direct benefits to local fauna, waterways and pollution levels. The major benefits of planted nature strips are:

- Reduced water and fertiliser use.
- Creation of ecological corridors for fauna (birds, reptiles and insects).
- Assisting stormwater infiltration and pollution (rainwater that drains off roofs, roads and buildings and flows into gutters, waterways and eventually groundwater, oceans and rivers).
- Enhanced biodiversity.
- Improved streetscape amenity and softening of hard surfaces such as roads, footpaths and driveway paving, fences and building.
- Provide a protective habitat for smaller birds and fauna from competing larger exotic species.
- Support human health and wellbeing; and
- Help build neighbourhood identity.

3. Land to which this Policy applies

This Policy applies to all Council owned and/or controlled street verges and nature strips in the City of Canada Bay. For the purposes of this Policy a Nature Strip is defined as "Any Council owned and/or controlled land located between a constructed road and a parcel of private property but does not include land reserved for a public purpose or bushland".

4. Policy

As part of the *Nature Strip Planting Policy* it is the resident's responsibility to maintain and adhere to the guidelines stated in the policy. Council will support the planting of nature strips as long as landowners and residents comply with the following guidelines and do not compromise community safety.

The guidelines for planting the nature strip/verge are as follows:

1. If the nature strip is located in a heritage conservation area, Council's Duty Officer will need to be contacted during the hours of 8.30am-1pm Tuesday – Thursday. The officer will advise of further considerations if located in a heritage conservation area through a referral to Council's Heritage Advisor. You can determine if you are in a heritage conservation area by viewing the maps in Appendix 1 of the Canada Bay Development Control Plan <http://www.canadabay.nsw.gov.au/planning-controls-lep-and-dcp.html#acctab2>
2. Prior to the establishment of a nature strip garden, the resident must '**Dial Before You Dig**' (phone number 1100) to ascertain the location of any underground services. The resident will receive a referral notice and confirmation of services from the utilities company within the area of request. The resident will need to attach this

documentation to the approval for planting checklist, *Appendix A; Nature Strip planting setup checklist*. Planting is not advised on 'top' of services, access should be maintained at all times. Planting and digging depth should be a maximum of 400mm deep. No mechanised tools and equipment are permitted. Refer to the Section 7 (in this policy) **SAFETY and ACCESS** for further advice.

3. It is extremely important that a **Dial Before You Dig**' is undertaken on the proposed planting of the nature strip. Digging into a gas pipe, or electrical cable can be a fatal mistake. Individuals are also liable for any damage to undergrounds networks. Maps will be provided by utilities identified in the '**Dial Before You Dig**' , if you are unclear on how to read these, please contact the service network provider that has provided the maps.
4. It is suggested that the resident undertaking any approved planting on the nature strip take additional measures to locate any service such as shallow potholing or by using a service locator.
5. Plantings are not permitted adjacent to disabled parking areas.
6. Plantings must have a minimum 600mm setback from the kerb to allow for cars doors to open and persons to exit vehicles.
7. The parking lane shall not be obstructed or reserved. If required, appropriate consent from Council must be granted to temporarily use parking lane. Footpaths are to remain free of materials and equipment to allow pedestrian access at all times.
8. Plantings must be greater than 10m in distance from corner kerb blocks to allow road visibility.
9. Installed plantings are to be maintained at a maximum height of 700mm, unless an existing street tree. Plants are to be low growing to ensure they do not interfere with car or pedestrian sight lines.
10. Plantings must not occur within the existing street tree root zone. They must be at a minimum of 2m from the base of any street tree.
11. During the installation process, no tools, equipment and materials are to obstruct the footpath.
12. Plantings must allow pedestrian access across a nature strip (at least 1m wide clearing).
13. Hard landscaping elements such as rocks, timber, retaining walls, sculptures or ornaments must not be used.
14. Mulch material must be kept stable and properly contained. Recommended treatments include granitic sand and finely ground organic mulch, such as soft fall material. Larger materials such as stones or crushed rock greater than 10 mm or chunky woodchips are not to be used.
15. Irrigation systems must not be placed within the nature strip.
16. Plants must not grow over the edges of the footpath or kerb, must not have thorns, and must not be identified by the Noxious Weeds Act 1993. *Appendix B; Noxious weed list City of Canada Bay Council*.
17. Council will take no responsibility for any maintenance or damage to the garden. If the garden is not maintained to the guidelines council can issue an order under the NSW Roads Act 1993. The nature strip planting is to be established under the full financial responsibility of the adjoining landowner. This includes associated costs with planting, maintenance and removal if the area is unable to be maintained or if the owner is selling or moving from the property.

18. Nature strips plantings that are unable to be maintained or managed are to be returned to grass (Buffalo) nature strips. This includes nature strips that pose a hazard or prior to the sale of the property unless otherwise agreed in the contract for sale and is at the cost and responsibility of the adjoining landowner.
19. Council reserves the right to make assessments of all nature strips and to order removal where appropriate.
20. Plants must not have prickly leaves or other parts that might harm users of the nature strip.
21. Adequate areas are to be kept free of plants to allow placement of mobile garbage, recycling and green waste bins, and to allow for car door opening and pedestrian traffic alignment.
22. Changes to nature strip levels or retaining walls that might interfere with drainage will not be permitted.
23. The type and placement of materials shall be designed in such a manner as to prevent it being displaced or washed onto the road or into the stormwater gutter in a rain event. Mulch or soils must stay level to the kerb and path.
24. Planting artificial or synthetic grass is not permitted. This can inhibit rainwater soaking into the ground and add to stormwater run-off during heavy rain events. Synthetic grass could also be a trip hazard to pedestrians.
25. Adding structures, such as raised corrugated planter boxes or placing objects such as stone walls or rocks is not permitted.
26. Nature strip plantings are not permitted on regional or arterial (state) roads in the City of Canada Bay local government area. A complete list of these roads is attached in *Appendix D; City of Canada Bay Regional and Arterial roads*.
27. Approved plantings on nature strips are to be undertaken by residents only, no contractors are permitted to install plantings.

5. Sustainability Considerations

- A list of recommended plant species can be found in *Appendix E Recommended Native Plants of Canada Bay fact sheet*.
- Plant selection for landscaping works should be guided by Council's principal vegetation theme of waterwise native plants.
- Plants should be tough enough to withstand the pressures of occasional pedestrian traffic.
- Plants should be able to cover the ground effectively to compete with weeds.
- Plants listed as noxious or environmental weeds must not be used. This is highly important as seeds from nature strip plants can easily get into the stormwater system and reach our waterways where weeds are difficult to control. These plants have a history of destroying nearby natural vegetation areas making them unsuitable for native animals and birds.
- For health and safety reasons the planting of edible plants on nature strips is not permitted.

For health and safety purposes, the resident should wear suitable sun smart attire during the planting process, ensure access to safe drinking water and be of good health to undertake planting activities.

6. Ongoing Maintenance

All general maintenance of the nature strip is the responsibility of the adjoining landowner, with the exception of street trees and any concreted walkways, which will be maintained by Council.

- Nature strip soil levels, including mulch, shall be maintained at the same level of the adjoining footpath, driveway or kerb. Ideally, nature strips should be gently graded towards the kerb for drainage purposes.
- Foliage must not be allowed to overhang or obstruct pedestrian access to footpaths.
- Residents are to keep their nature strips free of litter, and in a tidy state.
- If Council or a service provider needs to access utilities within the nature strip, restoration will be limited to grass and soil.

7. Safety & Access

All beautification works must maintain clearances and visibility for pedestrian, cycle and vehicular traffic when using, entering or exiting an intersection, driveway or footpath. Any works considered hazardous will be required to be removed or made safe at the cost of the adjoining landowner. A clearing to allow pedestrian access across the nature strip must be kept to a minimum of 1m wide (1000mm). **See Appendix C** Process of Action for Non-Compliant Nature Strip Identified

The nature strip contains many assets. Some of these assets are the City of Canada Bay Council's responsibility, whilst the majority of the assets will be the responsibility of other authorities. Before any excavation of the Nature Strip a **Dial Before You Dig'** (phone number 1100) must be performed to locate any underground service. The exact depth of existing Utility assets may vary from current standards due to the age of the asset. It is therefore the private landowner's responsibility to take all possible care to avoid damage to any existing Utility asset, as any damage caused may result in the Utility seeking compensation for the cost of repairs.

8. Utilities & Service Maintenance Works

Utility companies that supply water, gas, electricity and telecommunications may from time to time require access to the nature strip to perform maintenance work. The utility companies are required to make good the nature strip following maintenance work, but are not required to re-instate residential nature strips that have been landscaped other than in grass.

Council cannot guarantee that any of the maintenance contractors will replace plants and mulch to match the condition that existed prior to maintenance work.

Council will not be responsible for replacing plants or landscaping as a result of such works.

9. Risk Management & Care

City of Canada Bay Council is very much aware of the need to provide a safe environment within the City. As the nature strip is public land, the City must be vigilant when it comes to recognising when a threat to public safety exists.

Any feature that is deemed by the City to be a risk to the public as a tripping hazard, a falling hazard, obstruction or other hazard, may be removed from the nature strip without consultation or warning.

Council will take appropriate action to rectify problems in relation to tripping hazards or safety issues. Council officers will write to the relevant property owner requesting that they attend to the identified problem within a specified and reasonable timeframe. If the property owner fails to comply with this request, Council will implement the work deemed to be necessary, and seek recovery of costs incurred.

If the property owner fails to take action, a delegated Council Officer will issue an order under the NSW Roads Act 1993, requesting that the specific problem be fixed.

Failure to take action following a 'Notice of non-compliance' can result in an on-the-spot fine or legal proceedings. All fines would be issued under the NSW Roads Act 1993. This applies to all non-compliant landscaping found in nature strips.

10. Enforcement of guidelines

Under the NSW Roads Act 1993 the adjoining property owner may be ordered by Council to remove any nature strip treatments which are installed contrary to these guidelines, and may be requested to replace them with an approved nature strip treatment. Such work is to be carried out by the adjoining property owner at their own cost

11. Related process roles and responsibilities

This Policy is administered by the City of Canada Bay.

12. Related Policies and Plans

- *Appendix A Nature Strip planting setup checklist*
- *Appendix B Noxious weed list City of Canada Bay Council*
- *Appendix C Process of Action for Non-Compliance*
- *Appendix D City of Canada Bay State Regional Roads Map*
- *Appendix E Recommended Native Plants of Canada Bay fact sheet.*

Council will formally review this policy at regular intervals, bringing it in to line with the FuturesPlan20 review process and any associated legislative change.

For further information contact Councils Customer Service Centre on 9911 6555.