

# Verge guidelines

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For residential, commercial  
and industrial streetscapes



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# Overview

The City of Swan (City) is the largest local authority by area and one of the fastest growing within the Perth metropolitan region, with a diverse range of existing and new residential, commercial and industrial development.

Streetscapes and verges create a strong physical image for the City and have aesthetic, social and economic value for the community. Streetscapes help to reinforce the identity of a place, provide a corridor to support biodiversity, reduce the impacts of the urban heat island effect and create an environment that supports pedestrian activity.

Waterwise verges with native plants and mulch increase water efficiency and stormwater infiltration, create a cooling effect, provide habitat for local wildlife, increase biodiversity and protect river health through reducing fertiliser runoff. Additionally, the greening of verges can be beneficial for human health and wellbeing, increase aesthetic value, save money and maintenance effort and potentially improve property prices. The City has a preference for local native species where possible and encourages residents to transform their verges to be waterwise and biodiverse.

These Verge Guidelines assist residents to improve, embellish and maintain the verge adjacent to their property. They demonstrate the City's commitment to the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goal 15, Life on Land.



## What is a Verge?

The verge is the area between the edge of the road and the private property boundary. Verges are owned by the Crown (State Government) and management is vested to the City. Verges provide a buffer between the road and private property where essential services and public infrastructure may be located.

The verge width varies from property to property. The City's [online mapping tool](#) can assist residents in locating their private property boundaries.

## Who's Responsible for Maintaining the Verge?

The City has management responsibility for verges, however encourages the adjacent resident to take responsibility for the embellishment, maintenance and use of the verge, to improve the environmental value and visual appeal of their property and neighbourhood.

The City of Swan undertakes planting, pruning and maintenance of trees that are located on the verge to minimise hazards, improve street presentation and ensure their long term survival. The City is also responsible for provision and maintenance of public infrastructure located within the verge such as footpaths and kerbing.

The City undertakes biannual slashing of unmaintained verges and carries out the following a maximum of three times a year:

- Spraying of weeds on unmaintained verges with suitable chemicals.
- Spraying of weeds in hardstand structures such as footpaths, kerbs and medians as part of our regular asset maintenance weed spraying program.

For more information on weed spraying and glyphosate use please see [Weed Control in the City of Swan](#).

## Design Considerations

High level considerations prior to altering your verge include:

1. Vehicular visibility – how your verge treatment impacts vehicle sight lines, both on the road and entering/exiting properties. Plant heights and species should be carefully considered.
2. Access and movement – plants or tree limbs encroaching into footpath areas or loose material such as pebbles could spill into the public realm. Pedestrians, mail delivery or access into your property needs to be considered.
3. Services and public infrastructure – the verge is home to a number of services and public infrastructure. Be careful with tree selection to avoid contact with overhead infrastructure and ensure anything placed on the verge can be easily moved if access is needed.
4. Tree roots – when renovating your garden and verge be careful not to cut or interfere with the root systems of mature trees.
5. Dial **1100** for Dial Before You Dig or go [online](#) prior to any works commencing on site.

# What is Allowed on the Verge?

The City's Local Laws allow for certain landscape treatments to be undertaken without obtaining permission from the City. These are:

1. Shrubs and ground covers
2. Grass
3. Organic mulch
4. Irrigation

For the interest and safety of the wider community, there are some conditions that need to be applied to landscaping on the verge. Please refer to the above considerations and below guidelines for information regarding setbacks and plant height restrictions.

## Shrubs and Groundcovers

1. Groundcovers or shrubs shall be planted greater than 500mm away from a path, driveway, public utilities or any other structural element within the verge.
2. For verge widths less than 6.5m, groundcovers or shrubs that grow to a maximum height of 500mm at maturity may be used.
3. For verge widths greater than 6.5m but less than 8.5m, groundcovers or shrubs that grow to a maximum height of 500mm at maturity may be used within 6.5m of the kerb and up to 1.5m high at maturity for the remaining verge width, subject to not obstructing sight lines and/or creating hazards for pedestrians and motorists.
4. For verge widths greater than 8.5m, groundcovers or shrubs that grow to a maximum height of 500mm at maturity may be used within 6.5m of the kerb, then up to 1.5m high for the next 2m and up to 3m high at maturity for the remaining width, subject to not obstructing sight lines and/or creating hazards for pedestrians and motorists.
5. For verges that do not have a path, a clear zone of grass, mulch or other approved material to a minimum width of 1.2 m shall be required over the length of the verge for public access.
6. Barriers between grassed areas and other verge treatments are to consist of concrete, limestone, unit pavers or other approved materials, set flush with the adjacent ground level.
7. Local native plant species that require minimal water, fertiliser and on-going maintenance are preferred.
8. Whenever possible, planting, even with irrigation, shall be undertaken during the months May to September.
9. All plantings should be mulched to reduce water evaporation.

## Grass

1. *Pennisetum clandestinum* (kikuyu) is recommended for its drought tolerance.

## Organic Mulch

1. Mulch shall be placed to a minimum recommended settled depth of 75mm.
2. Suitable mulch includes pinebark, shredded green waste older than 15 months or similar. To reduce the risk of spreading Phytophthora Dieback, mulch should be sourced from reputable suppliers.
3. Peat moss should not be used in any mulch application.
4. Residents can collect up to half a cubic metre of mulch from the **Recycling Centre – Bullsbrook**. This equates to a 6 x 4 trailer load. Free mulch is subject to availability.

## Irrigation

1. Dial **1100** for Dial before You Dig or go **online** prior to any works commencing on site.
2. Waterwise design principles must be incorporated into irrigation designs for planted and grassed areas.
3. Water usage shall be in accordance with Department of Water legislation, with respect to watering times and hours.
4. Where in-ground irrigation is installed to grassed areas, no part is to protrude above ground level except for pop-up sprinklers during operation.
5. The location and type of spray outlets must be selected to avoid water spray onto roads, crossovers, paths and other paved areas.
6. Irrigation controllers and valves shall be installed within the private property boundary.



# Improving Your Verge

## Waterwise Native Gardens

Transforming verge with waterwise native plants and mulch, whilst maintaining safety and access, can improve environmental values and increase street appeal.

Residents may wish to replace grass, weeds or a hard surface on their verge with a waterwise native plant garden.

Waterwise native verges use less water and fertiliser than traditional lawn verges, saving money and reducing fertiliser input into rivers. Converting verge lawns to waterwise gardens is estimated to save around 20,000 to 40,000 litres of water per year per lawn.

The Water Corporation's website provides useful information on [Creating a Waterwise Verge](#). For information on selecting waterwise groundcovers and shrubs, visit the [Waterwise plant search](#) on the Water Corporation's website. For information on suitable verge tree species, refer to the Street Tree section.

## Local Native and Endemic Species

Australia is a large and diverse continent, with a variety of species and ecosystems present. If you are considering installing a waterwise verge, why not go the extra step and plant local native species that are specific to your soil type and area. This will increase the biodiversity and provide a food source and habitat for local wildlife. Local native species are local to the area but could be found elsewhere while endemic species are only found in that area.

Local native plants are adapted to local conditions and low nutrient soils. Use the City's soil type map available at [planting in different soil types](#) to determine your natural soil type. Refer to the relevant pamphlet to see what plants are best suited to your area, taking into consideration the height of mature shrubs and groundcovers planted on verges must comply with the criteria listed above. Additional information can be found on the growing local plants – gardening guide and tips available on the same webpage.

For information on suitable native tree species for your verge, and how to request or seek approval for verge trees, refer to the Street Tree section.

The City runs free community education programs such as [Thinking Green](#) with workshops on topics such as how to create sustainable and waterwise native gardens. Find out more about [Environmental events and workshops](#).

## Soil Improvements

Improving your soil before planting lawn and gardens (native or exotic) is beneficial to helping them establish successfully and will assist them to become stronger specimens. This can save you money and effort in the long term by not having to replace them. Simple steps you can take to improve your soil include:

- Use compost or soil conditioner appropriate for your intended plantings
- Apply a wetting agent in a granular or liquid form
- Apply organic mulch to the soil surface after planting
- Use slow release fertiliser at appropriate times of the year (see below for more information)

## Fertiliser Usage

Home lawns and gardens are a major source of nutrients entering wetlands, creeks and the river systems. Excess fertiliser used on home lawns and gardens eventually enters wetlands and rivers via the drainage system or through the soil into the groundwater table.

Excessive nutrients lead to algal blooms, which may result in plants and animal deaths.

To minimise negative impacts of fertiliser in the environment, select an appropriate fertiliser and follow the instructions. Fertilising in Spring or Autumn is recommended as summer fertilising may increase water usage and winter fertilising will be washed into stormwater drains or leached into groundwater.

For more advice, please visit [Fertilise Wise](#).



## Edible Gardens

Any verge treatment that seeks to improve the amenity of an area is encouraged in the City. Vegetable or fruit gardens, often referred to as edible gardens, are permissible but are subject to approval by the City. Applications can be made using the [Application to Alter Verge Form](#).

There are a few things to consider when planting an edible verge garden:

1. The garden will need to be maintained by the resident, with no rotting fruit or vegetables for health and biosecurity reasons.
2. By placing the garden on the verge you do not have sole access. Anyone can legally pick the fruit and vegetables (including people not residing in the street).
3. There may not be any structures on the verge (including raised planter boxes, walls, fences, etc.).
4. Trees must be 1.8 metres from the road. Please contact the City for approval prior to planting a tree on the verge that is not on the City's list of approved tree species (see the section on Street Trees for more information).
5. No shrubs are allowed within 500mm of the road.
6. If the garden becomes neglected or the City receives complaints about rotting fruit, the City reserves the right to remove the vegetation.





## Other Permissible Verge Treatments

The use of hardstand treatments other than for paths and crossovers is not normally encouraged within the City for safety, drainage, environmental and aesthetic reasons. The following treatments are allowed but require written permission from the City:

1. Paving
2. Synthetic Turf
3. Compact aggregate – ferrocrete, cracker dust or road base

For these treatments to be considered on any portion of the verge, an **Application to Alter Verge Form** must be submitted to the City.

If you are considering installing a vehicle crossover, refer to the **Crossover information and Specification for the Construction of Vehicle Crossovers September 2021**.

### Paving, Synthetic Turf and Compact Aggregate

1. The Applicant is responsible for:
  - a. Installing the paving, synthetic turf or compact aggregate as per the detailed plan submitted with the Application to Alter Verge Form and approved by the City.
  - b. Maintaining the paving, synthetic turf or compact aggregate in a safe and sound condition.
  - c. Reinstating the paving, synthetic turf or compact aggregate at the Applicant's cost in the event that any City or government utilities have reason to disturb the synthetic turf to work on their infrastructure.
2. There must be at least one opening of a minimum of one metre by one metre in the hardstand treatment for the placement of a tree or garden bed per property frontage and two or three openings in side verges for corner lots, subject to width and length of verge.
3. Paving, synthetic turf or compact aggregate must be installed with the finished levels, where possible, collecting the water and where possible, directing water flow into the tree well(s) or garden beds.

# Street Trees

Trees provide an important service in urban areas due to their ability to absorb carbon and purify the air that we breathe. They also help to cool outdoor spaces particularly in heat-absorbing paved areas. Trees and other vegetation have a significant role in providing amenity, liveability, habitat for biodiversity and in supporting mental wellbeing for our community.

## Planting Your Own trees

The City's approval is required for all tree plantings on City land including verges.

The City's Tree Guidelines stipulate the tree species that are acceptable within the City of Swan. Local native tree species that reflect the local character and conditions of the area are preferred. Please contact the City if you are wishing to plant any tree not listed in the Tree Guidelines.

- If you wish to plant a tree on your verge please contact the City to discuss your species preference and seek approval. Unauthorised planting on City land may result in the removal or relocation of the planting at the resident's cost.

Planting under power lines requires careful species selection.

For the safety of the community, there are requirements to be followed when planting trees on the verge. Please refer to the City's [Tree Guidelines](#) for information regarding setbacks and plant height restrictions.

## Free Street Trees

The City has a free street tree program which is designed to improve streetscapes by planting trees that provide shade, improve air quality and offer habitat and food for native animals. Available trees are listed in the [Street Tree Selection Brochure](#) and are subject to availability and supply. Planting is completed in winter but requests may be placed at any time of the year by calling the City on **(08) 9267 9267** or emailing the City at [swan@swan.wa.gov.au](mailto:swan@swan.wa.gov.au)

Assessment of requests for street trees take into account location, available space, suitable species, existing themes, local character, local conditions, soil conditions, and customer's requirements.

For the best chance of survival, residents are encouraged to water the verge tree until it becomes established, normally for the first two summers.

Find out more about [street trees](#) online.

# What isn't Allowed on the Verge?

Verges provide a buffer between the road and private property where essential services and public infrastructure may be located. As access to these services may be required some hardstand treatments are not permissible in the City of Swan.

The following cannot be installed on the verge:

- Asphalt
- Bitumen
- Concrete
- All structures including walls, planter boxes, letter boxes and seats
- Loose aggregate – pea gravel, blue metal, crushed brick or stone aggregate



# Rural Verges

## Rural Revegetation Program

The Rural Revegetation Program encourages revegetation using native species on rural properties by offering free native plants to City of Swan residents whose properties are 4,000 square metres (1 acre) or greater in size.

A range of trees, shrubs of various sizes, groundcovers and wetland/creek species are available. These species are adapted to Perth's soil and climate and have low watering requirements.

More information, including application details, are available at the [Rural Revegetation Program](#).

## Clearing Vegetation within the Verge

Any proposed clearing of native vegetation or street trees within the verge must be approved by the City of Swan. Street trees, even in a rural setting, are considered property of the City of Swan and the City's approval is required to remove or alter trees. In addition, as rural verges may be home to threatened ecological communities and protected native vegetation, the unauthorised clearing is unlawful.

There may be some activities which are exempt from requiring a clearing permit, such as establishing or maintaining a fence line, clearing as detailed in an approved development application or other clearing that meets the requirements as listed by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation. In any event, the City of Swan should be contacted in the first instance.

## Hazard Reduction

Rural verges can require careful management of fuel loads to minimise the threat from fire. Landowners are encouraged to consider the verge adjoining their property as a part of their land's overall fuel management plan.

Removal of non-native vegetation (except for street trees) and non-permanent works such as slashing, reducing leaf litter and removing fallen branches are acceptable methods to address the fuel load. Burning of verges, clearing or thinning existing native vegetation is not allowed without appropriate approvals from the Department of Environment and Regulation and the City of Swan. If you wish to discuss the management of a rural verge please call the City of Swan on (08) 9267 9267.

Grassed verges that are accessible are mowed on an annual program. Additionally the City conducts a significant road tree pruning and verge clearing program to improve safety for all road users and reduce identified fire hazards.

For more information, see [Verge maintenance in Rural areas](#).

## Burn Permit

Burn permits can be applied for online or in person by visiting your local volunteer bushfire brigade, or for the metropolitan area by contacting City of Swan.

There are some conditions that may prevent you from being allowed to undertake burns on the verge, such as the presence or proximity to threatened ecological communities or native vegetation.

If a permit is issued, it will have compulsory conditions set relevant to current and forecasted weather and your circumstances. Further conditions may be imposed at the discretion of the permit issuing officer.

## Other Considerations

### Temporary Structures Placed in the Verge

Placing any temporary structure such as a skip bin, shipping container, building material or construction equipment on the verge is governed by the Local Government (Uniform Local Provisions) Regulations 1996 and requires approval from the City. A written application with a detailed plan is to be submitted via an Application for Temporary Structures, available at [Verge information](#).

### Crossovers

A crossover is a vehicle pathway that connects your property to the edge of the road, for example, a brick paved driveway.

There are different types of crossovers, each with their own specifications, including dimensions, materials and preparation. Find out more information at [Crossover information](#).

If you have any queries please contact the City's engineering team on **(08) 9267 9267**.

## Parking

In order to legally stop or park a vehicle on a verge, consent must first be provided by the adjacent property owner or occupier. There are, however, various locations throughout the City where verge parking is prohibited by signs and it is an offence to stop or park a vehicle on these verges at all times.

For more information, see [Safe and legal parking on verges](#). For full details and regulation please refer to the relating [Local Law 8.18 Parking and Stopping on a Verge](#).

If you wish to address inappropriate verge parking there are two approaches:

1. Contact the City on **(08) 9267 9267** when someone parks on your verge without your permission, to request enforcement action and a City Officer will attend as soon as possible.
2. Landscape your verge in line with approved verge treatments as listed in the allowable treatments section, or permissible treatments section of this document. No structures, such as rocks or bollards, are to be placed to deter parking.



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alternative formats on request.

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