

INNER WEST

Verge Gardening Guidelines

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Council acknowledge the Gadigal and Wangal peoples of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of this land, and would also like to pay respect to Aboriginal Elders, past and present, and acknowledge their young people who will be our future leaders.



LGA Wards

Balmain Ward – Baludarri (Leather Jacket)

Leichhardt Ward – Gulgadya (Grass Tree)

Ashfield Ward – Djarrawunang (Magpie)

Stanmore Ward – Damun (Port Jackson Fig)

Marrickville Ward – Midjuburi (Lillypilly)



Introduction

Council's verge gardening program provides an opportunity for residents to garden on the Council owned verge adjoining their property. Increasing the diversity of plants on verges and providing space for residents to garden has a range of environmental and social benefits.

Verge gardening is one of the many urban greening and gardening programs that Inner West residents can get involved in. These programs help improve biodiversity corridors, address climate change impacts such as urban heat and make the Inner West a better place.

The objective of the Verge Gardening Guidelines is to provide a framework for residents to design, establish and maintain an authorised verge garden on the verge adjoining their property whilst:

- Considering other uses of the verge including parking and access, street trees, waste collection and storage, access, and infrastructure essential service requirements and other community needs.
- Ensuring the verge doesn't jeopardise public safety.

See over the page for available programs

Urban greening & gardening programs



Community Gardens

Grow food together on public land. innerwest.nsw.gov.au/CommunityGardens



Community Native Nurseries

Buy local native plants or volunteer at a nursery. innerwest.nsw.gov.au/CommunityNurseries



Nature for Backyards

Plan, create and maintain a native garden in your yard, courtyard or balcony. innerwest.nsw.gov.au/NatureForBackyards



Water sensitive design on your property

Learn how to design your garden to mimic natural water systems. innerwest.nsw.gov.au/watersensitivedesign



Natural Areas

21 hectares of local native understorey plantings. Become a bushcare volunteer to help Council look after these areas. innerwest.nsw.gov.au/bushcareprograms



Public Trees

Council looks after 74,000 trees on public land and plants more every year. Find out more and request a street tree. innerwest.nsw.gov.au/StreetTrees



Compost Collective

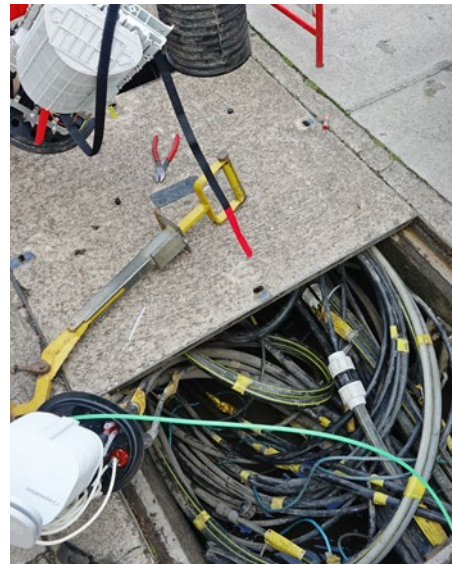
For residents wanting to compost together. innerwest.nsw.gov.au/CompostCollective



Food waste avoidance

Composting and worm farm programs. innerwest.nsw.gov.au/Composting





Various uses of verges



Gardening on the verge

Footpaths and verges are important areas of public land used for a variety of purposes by different members of the community. Verges are spaces for important underground infrastructure such as electricity and internet cables and stormwater pipes. They provide a place for residents to have their rubbish collected from, refuge for pedestrians crossing the road and access for people getting in and out of parked cars. Verges also provide sight lines for motorists to see pedestrians, cyclists and other vehicles at intersections.

Gardening in a multi-purpose public space means that verge gardens can be prone to damage from foot traffic, emergency works or vandalism. Safety and access for people of all abilities as well as access to infrastructure must be prioritised. Council has a duty of care to ensure public safety, accessibility and essential public infrastructure and services are not jeopardised. These guidelines help residents to ensure verge gardens are safe, sustainable and that verges remain accessible by all users.

Every verge is unique in its layout and user needs. Council retains the right to determine additional site-specific requirements. Not all verges are suitable for verge gardens. Written Council approval is required before commencing gardening on the verge.

Lanes

Gardening in lanes is often not permitted due to limited space, safety issues and multiple conflicting uses. If you wish to garden in a lane please submit an application noting it is for a lane and a Council officer will be in touch to discuss suitability.

Verge Gardener Responsibilities

- Read and meet requirements in the verge gardening policy and guidelines.
- Complete application and await approval before commencing gardening on the verge.
- Maintain safe and easy access for pedestrians, Council staff and other service providers at all times.
- Accept that a garden on public land is prone to unpredictable damage and impacts by members of the public (e.g. trampling, vandalism and theft) and service providers undertaking works and maintenance to ensure essential public services are maintained.
- Accept personal responsibility for the risks inherent with working near the road and undertake work in a way that minimises risks to safety of yourself and others.
- Check for services (Dial Before You Dig), prepare the ground, supply plants, mulch and other materials. Council can provide some local native plants to get your started.
- No planting, pruning, removal or damage of trees. Requests for new or replacement street trees can be made at innerwest.nsw.gov.au/StreetTrees
- Re-establish the verge garden and cover the costs if it's impacted by utility companies, Council works or other government agencies or vandalism. Infrastructure works maybe required at any time and without notice to ensure essential services to the community. Notice will be given when possible.
- Communicate with your neighbours about the verge garden.

Planning essentials to ensure a complaint and successful verge garden

Planning is required to ensure the verge garden meets safety and access requirements for all users whilst achieving other objectives such as increased biodiversity. Follow the guidance in this document to ensure you meet all requirements so your verge is compliant.

1. Consultation and Permission

- Talk to residents of neighbouring properties about your proposed verge garden.
- If applying for a verge garden adjoining a multi-unit dwelling you must get approval from strata. A letter from the strata with the common seal stamp must be submitted with your application.
- Submit an application to Council.
- Once you receive written approval you can begin gardening.

2. Check for Services

Lodge an enquiry with 'Dial Before You Dig' either online at www.1100.com.au or by calling 1100 to locate underground services (e.g., water, gas) and confirm that there are no underground pipes or cables that will be impacted by the garden. This is very important as service lines are sometimes only a few centimetres under the ground. Digging into a gas pipe or electrical cable with a shovel can be a fatal mistake. Individuals are liable for damage to underground services. If you are unsure about how to read the Dial-a-Dig information contact the relevant service owner before commencing work.

3. Design

The following practical and essential design elements help to ensure a safe and accessible verge for all users.

a. Refer to figure 1 or figure 2 to determine which design suits your verge.

b. Draw a rough plan and include access zones, infrastructure and area for rubbish bins and collection as set out below.

c. Access Zones – set aside clearance areas for the following uses:

- Residents putting bins out and collection by trucks
- Pedestrian getting in and out of vehicles (vehicle access zones), and opening doors and boots of parked cars – 600mm is required from the face of the kerb for wide verges (figure 2) or 1.2m for narrow verges (see figure 1)

- Pedestrians crossing the garden (link path) to access the road, footpath and vehicles. There must be at least one 600mm wide link path across the verge garden every 3 metres for this purpose.

- Accessing infrastructure. Pits, poles and other service infrastructure must not be covered by soil, mulch or plantings and must remain accessible.

d. Keep it simple and safe

- Raised garden beds, stakes, fencing, rocks, sculptures, pots, ornaments, all above ground edging, above or below ground compost and irrigation systems are not permitted.
- Only edging allowed is lawn edging which adjoins a garden and must be flush with the adjacent ground levels.

House

House

Figure 1. Narrow Verge Design

Design for narrow verge (1.2m wide or narrower from the face of the kerb).

Plant height: max 150mm which can cope with foot traffic

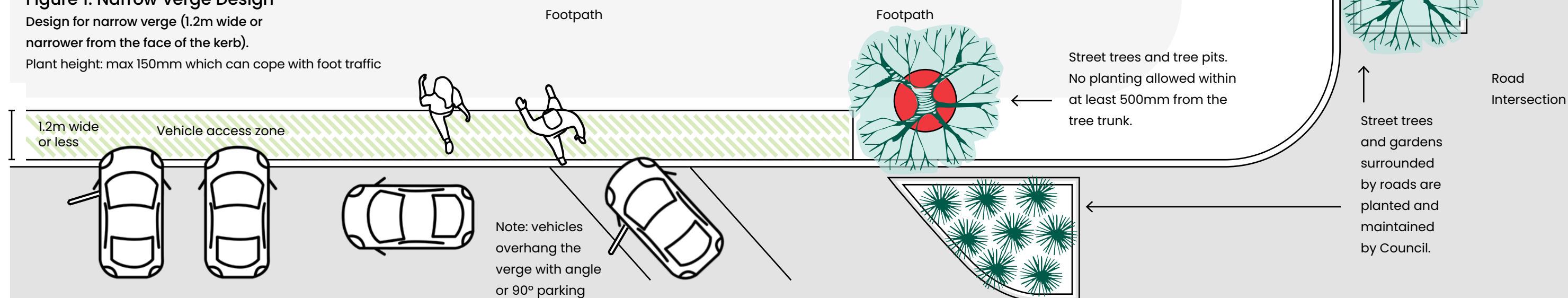
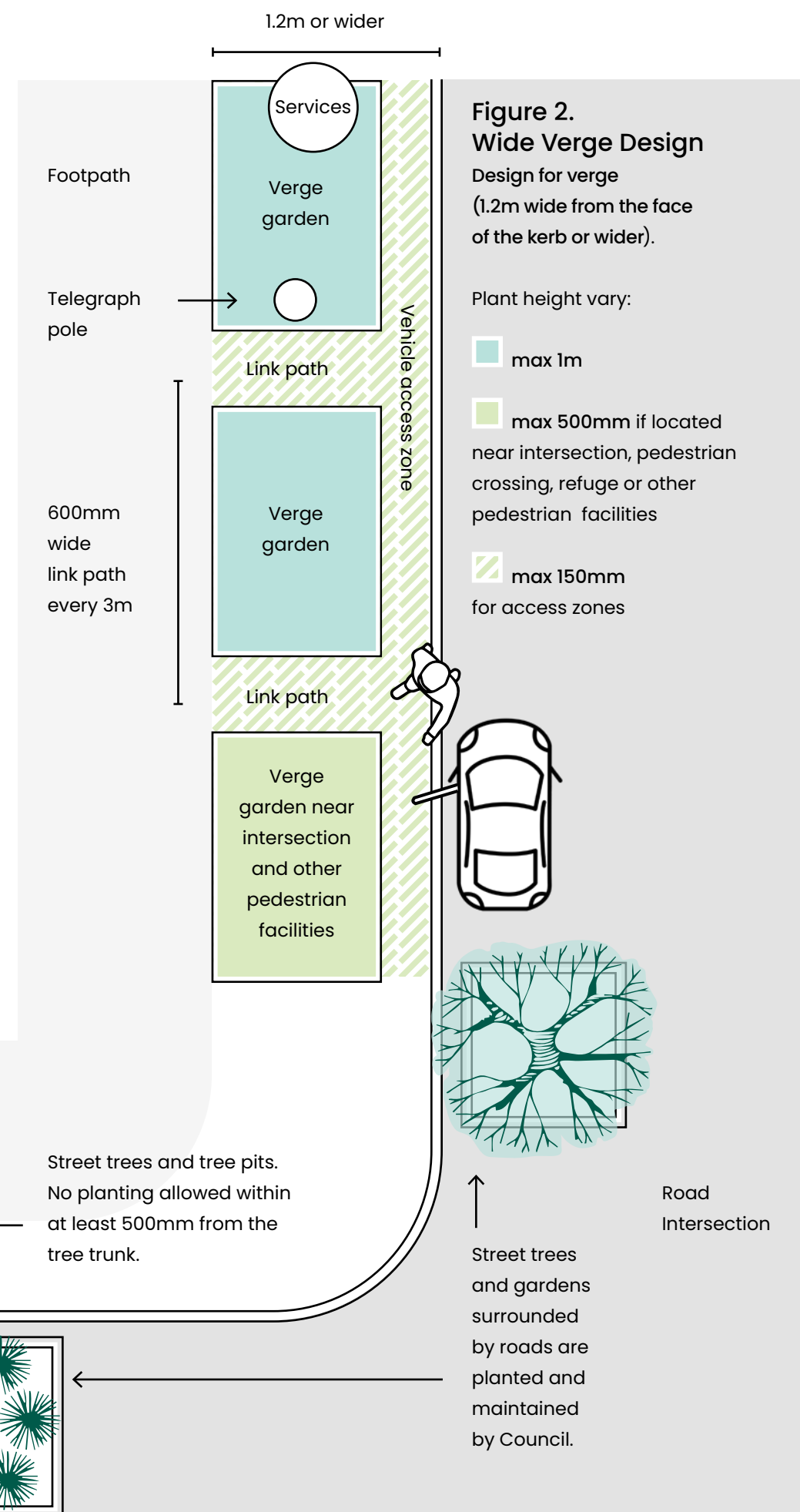


Figure 2. Wide Verge Design

Design for verge (1.2m wide from the face of the kerb or wider).

Plant height vary:

- max 1m
- max 500mm if located near intersection, pedestrian crossing, refuge or other pedestrian facilities
- max 150mm for access zones



4. Plant selection

Drought hardy local native plants are recommended. They are low maintenance as they have evolved under local conditions and are the best choice for native wildlife.

Select plants that are able to cope with challenging conditions including being walked on and soil erosion from stormwater or other causes.

Keep in mind that plants and/or whole verge gardens may need to be mowed or removed to maintain essential public services, for infrastructure construction and maintenance. Choose plants that can tolerate mowing, can be transplanted and are inexpensive to replace.

Figure 4. Plant height for specific verge types

Verge location, size or use	Maximum plant height
Access zones – vehicle access zone & link path	150mm that cope with foot traffic
Narrow verge 1.2m wide or less	150mm that cope with foot traffic
Intersections, pedestrian crossings, refuge, or other pedestrian facilities.	500mm when mature
Wide verge 1.2m or wider	1 metre when mature

- What NOT to plant:
- Plants that are invasive (native and non-native species) and environmental weeds. Search by species at <https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/>
 - Plants with sharp edges and thorns, and which drop fruit.

See recommended species list and resource list at the end of this document for further guidance on suitable species and where to get them.



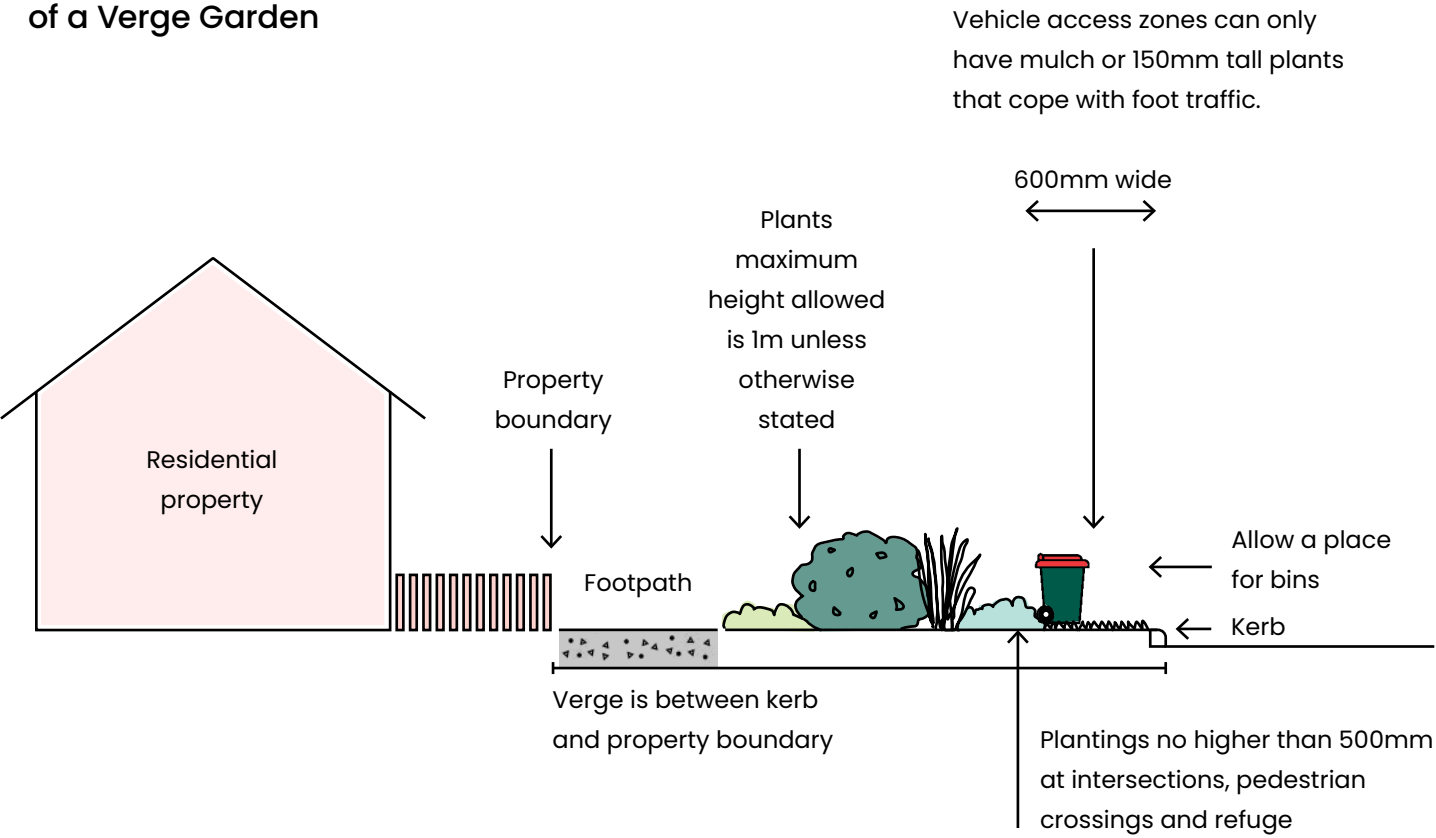
Food growing

Growing plants for food is not permitted due to the risks associated with soil contamination.

If you have an interest in growing food plants on public land, it’s best to find a community garden in your local area at innerwest.nsw.gov.au/CommunityGardens



Figure 3. Cross Section of a Verge Garden



5. Establishment and Maintenance

- a. When working on a verge garden ensure the site is safe for you and all pedestrians. Do not leave tools on the footpath.

b. To prevent unwanted damage to underground services or infrastructure digging must be undertaken using hand tools with excavation no deeper than 300mm.

c. To ensure public safety and health and safety of verge gardeners residents are not to use herbicides, pesticides or other chemicals on public verges.

d. Vegetation must be maintained to ensure it does not spill onto or impact the use of the footpath, access zone or road kerb.

e. Prevent water, soil, mulch or any materials from running off onto the road, footpath or drain by:

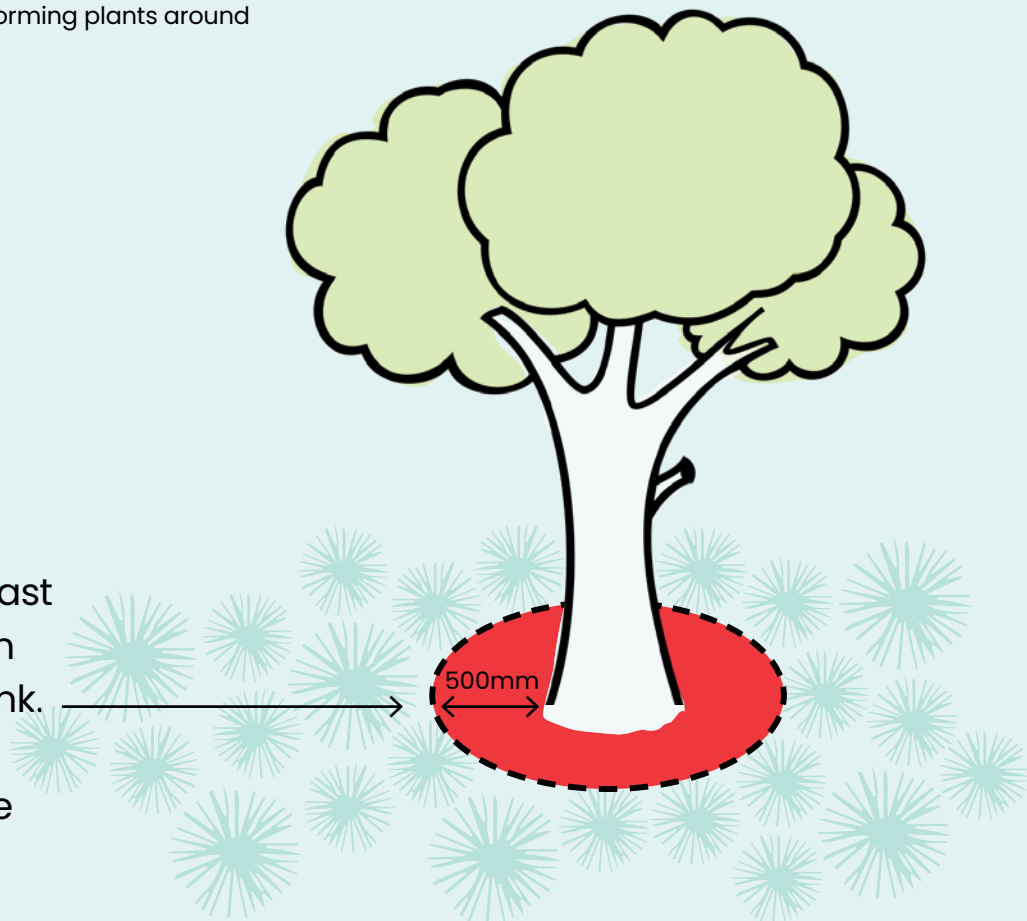
 - checking the weather forecast for rain when establishing the garden.
 - placing clumping or rhizome forming plants around the boundary of the verge.

f. Do the following to avoid damage to trees

 - Keep at least 500mm clearance around the tree trunk. Allow greater clearances for larger trees.
 - Use hand tools to carefully probe the soil surface, find void spaces around tree roots that allow for plantings. Do not damage any roots that are uncovered.
 - Use small plants such as seedlings and tube stock to avoid the need to dig large holes.
 - Where extensive tree roots are present choose plants with shallow root systems such as groundcovers, native grasses, bulbs and ferns.
 - Do not mound soil or organic matter against the tree trunk or on top of roots as this is not good for tree health.

No planting within at least 500mm clearance from the base of the tree trunk.

Allow greater clearance for larger trees.



Important General Information

1. Compliance

Verge gardeners may be asked to address safety, weed infestation, access issues as outlined in the Verge Garden Policy. Council will notify the resident in writing and request compliance within 14 days of the notice.

If Council is notified that a verge garden has been established without Council approval Council will issue a letter to the resident requesting submission of a formal application within 14 days of Council notice.

Should the resident continue to not comply, Council staff may take action necessary for the garden to comply including, but not limited to, trimming and removing vegetation or any other items that do not meet requirements or otherwise pose a risk to public access and safety. This may include removing all plants and any other items and returning the verge to lawn. Permission for the resident to garden on the verge may also be withdrawn.

In cases where there is a high risk to public safety Council may remove items without any notice. Council will not be liable for reimbursing residents for items removed.

2. Moving

Advise Council if you plan to move away or no longer wish to maintain the verge garden. Council may return the verge to lawn if the resident is no longer able to maintain the garden.

3. Insurance

Council provides public liability insurance for verge gardeners that are registered and are following the requirements outlined in the Verge Garden Policy and these guidelines. Council does not provide personal accident insurance.



Examples of non-compliant verge gardens

Left: This verge has the following non-compliant issues:

- plants taller than 1m high blocking sight lines.
- plants blocking the vehicle access zone.



Above: This verge has the following non-compliant issue:

- includes hard landscaping such as raised edging which may cause trip hazard.





4. Useful resources

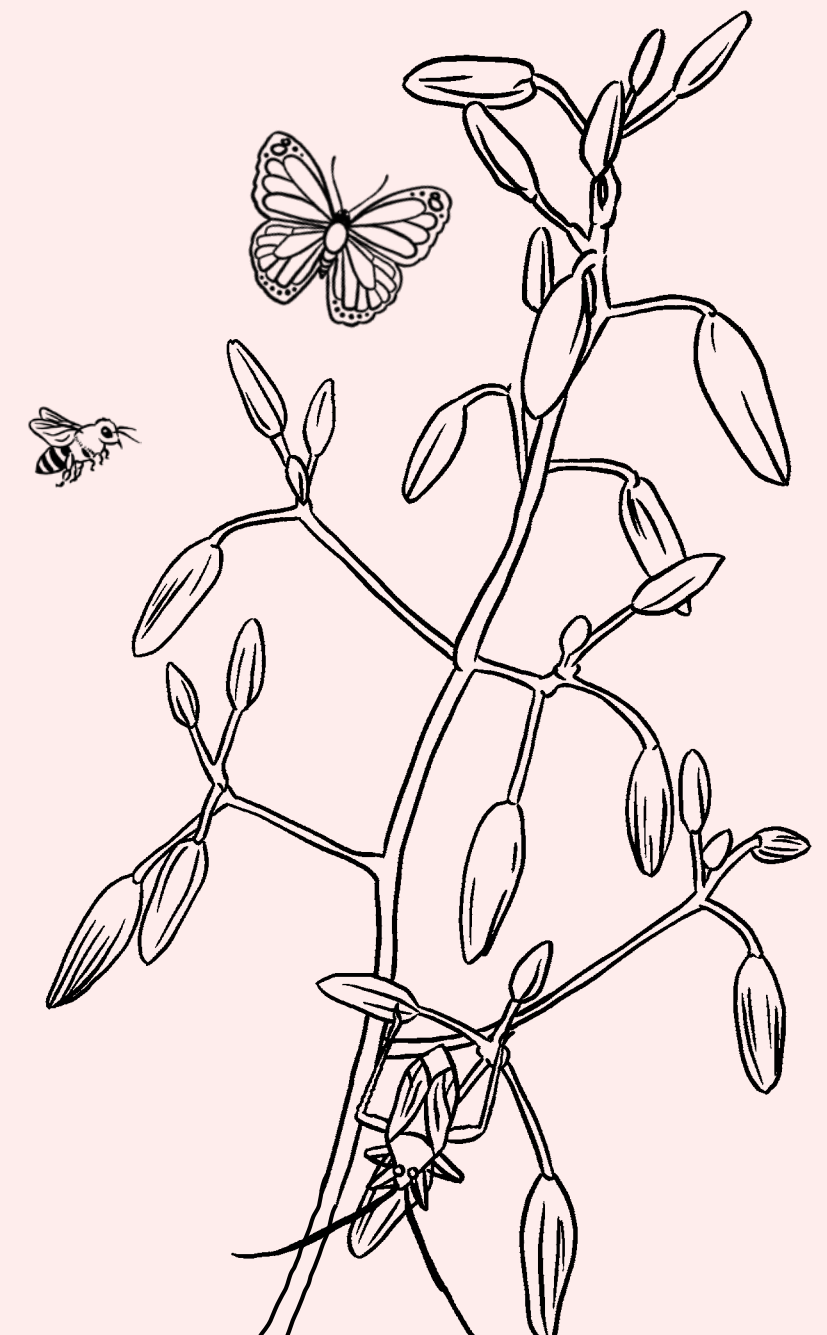
- Council's Verge Gardening Program – General guidance and information about verge gardens – innerwest.nsw.gov.au/VergeGardens
- Nature for Backyards – Gardening with natives including planting and watering instructions and places to buy local native plants. Please note that not all of the species listed in the guide are suitable for verges – innerwest.nsw.gov.au/NatureForBackyards
- Council's Community Native Nurseries – Buy local native plants and collect free mulch – innerwest.nsw.gov.au/CommunityNurseries
- Community Justice Centre – help to resolve neighbour disputes – https://www.cjc.justice.nsw.gov.au/Pages/cjc_what_is_mediation/com_justice_neighbours.aspx

Contact

Council's verge garden officer on 9392 5525 or submit a request at innerwest.nsw.gov.au/about/get-in-touch/online-self-service

Recommended Plant List

Verges are challenging environments for plants. The plants on this list are local native species that have evolved over thousands of years to suit local conditions with minimal maintenance. These plants are best for local wildlife including beneficial insects, butterflies, and birds.





Groundcovers and grasses

The following plants are perfect to create a grassy meadow or vibrant wildflower verge. Mix up your heights from a mass of low ground hugging plants in the access zone along the kerb and work your way up to taller flowering shrub or taller grass in the middle of the verge.

Australian Basket Grass (*Oplismenus aemulus*)
H: 30cm x W: 50cm
Creeping and matting grass which grows in partial shade or in full sun if soil is moist. Flower spikes to 30 cm. Has brown hairy 'beard'. Host plant for butterflies.

Berry Saltbush (*Einadia hastata*) H: 50cm
Tiny green flowers followed by red berries summer and autumn. Full sun to part or dappled shade, all soils. Attracts birds.

Barbwire grass (*Cymbopogon refractus*)
H: 1m
Tufted grass with tall wiry stems with greyish foliage and its inflorescence resembles the barbs of barbed wire. Attracts butterflies and provides shelter for animals including frogs, birds and mammals.



Bluebell (*Wahlenbergia gracilis*) H:30cm
A slender tufted perennial with sky blue flowers throughout the year.



Blue flax lily (*Dianella caerulea*) H:75cm
Mat forming, prefers fertile soils, perfect as an edging plant or on a sloped verges as it can help control erosion. Flowers in spring and has a long flower spike with small blue flowers which turn into purple/blue berries. Birds love to eat the berries, shelter for animals and attracts butterflies.

Bulbine (*Bulbine bulbosa*)
H:75cm x W:50cm
Clumping perennial, ideally moist well drained soil. Attracts Bees, butterflies and other insects.

Cranesbill (*Geranium homeanum*)
H: 70cm x W: 1m
A slender sprawling herb with small pale pink coloured in spring and summer. Attracts bees and butterflies

Cut-Leafed Daisy (*Brachycome multifida*)
H:45cm
A matting growth habit with foliage which is fine and deeply divided. The flowers are mauve, pink or white and flowers early autumn to mid-winter, but the daisy-like mauve flowerheads may appear throughout the year.

Fan flower (*Scaevola albidia*) H:30cm
A sprawling herbaceous scrambler with bluish mauve flowers in spring and summer. Attracts butterflies.



Flannel flower (*Actinotis helianthi*) H: 1m x 50cm
Perennial shrub which likes well drained soil in full sun to partial shade. Its short lived but has stunning felt like white flowers and grey foliage. Its relatively brittle stems and so require protection from strong winds to avoid branch breakage. Attracts Bees, butterflies and other insects.



Hedgehog grass
(*Echinopogon caespitosus*) H: 50cm
With a bristly round seed head. Full sun to part or dappled shade, all soils. Attracts butterflies.

Harsh fern (*Hypolepsis muelleri*) H: 1m x 2.0m
A creeping fern with green fronds. Despite the common name, the fronds are soft to touch. Prefers moist soil in part shade or shady site.

Kangaroo grass
(*Themedia triandra*) H: 1m x W: 50cm
Erect perennial native tussock with narrow green or grey green leaves. Glossy, rust coloured spikelets on slightly arching stems from September to February. Adaptable to a range of conditions. Attracts butterflies and birds eat the seeds

Knobbly club rush (*Ficinia nodosa*) H:1m
A clumping, tufted sedge with creeping rhizomes from which new stems arise. and globular seed heads 1.5 cm across towards the tips of the foliage. Flowering occurs mid-spring to early summer and prefers moist soil in either full sun or part shade.

Maidenhair fern
(*Adiantum aethiopicum*) H: 50cm
A delicate fern for damp and shady positions with no traffic. It spreads by underground rhizomes.

Native bluebell
(*Wahlenbergia gracilis*) H: 80cm
A slender tufted herb with sky-blue flowers in spring and summer.



Pale vanilla lily
(*Arthropodium milleflorum*) H:60cm
A tufted grass like herb with small white or pale pink and purple flowers in November – February.



Pigface (*Carpobrotus glaucescens*) H: 20cm x W: 2m
A creeping succulent with stunning bright pink flowers in spring and summer and glaucous green leaves, preferring well drained soil. Note: it doesn't like being walked. Provides fleshy fruit for birds.

Pomax (Pomax umbellata) H: 40cm
A spreading plant with soft hairy leaves and small green chandelier like flower arrangement, flowering in spring and summer.

Scurvy weed (*Commelina cyanea*) H: 30cm x W:2m
A trailing native herb with blue flowers with succulent leaves and stems, perfect for part shade to full shade with damp soil and dies back in the winter and takes off in the warm season. Note: it can take over an area so perfect choice if you want a mass planting of one plant. Attracts native bees and provides shelter for skinks.

Sickle fern (*Pellaea falcata*) H:60cm
A creeping fern with upright green fronds which prefers damp soil or shade to part shade.

Slender knotweed
(*Persicaria decipiens*) H: 60cm x W: 1m
Trailing red stems with small pink flowers from November to June and dies back in drought or winter. Prefers damp soil, provides shelter and seeds for birds.



Speedwell (*Veronica plebeia*) H: 30cm x W: 2m
Prostrate trailing stoloniferous herb, forming a mat, ideally in moist soil in full sun or shade. Wrinkled dark green triangular leaves and loose clusters of small mauve flowers from September to February.



Wallaby Grass
(*Austrodanthonia tenuior*) H: 80cm
Erect tufted native grass with flattish leaves. Highly tolerant of harsh soils and growing conditions. Provides textural interest and colour. Loose spikes of fluffy, purple flowerheads throughout the year. Should be considered as a lawn alternative as it tolerates mowing and traffic. Provides seeds for birds and attracts butterflies.

Weeping meadow grass
(*Microleana stipoides*) H: 30cm – 70cm
A tough native grass with thin green leaves and distinctive weeping seed head during between spring and autumn. It will spread by seed if allowed to seed. A perfect grass for part shady or sunny lawn areas or verges with medium traffic areas which can be mown or a natural and sustainable unmown look with a pedestrian crossing (access zones) every 3metres. Attracts butterflies and wombats

Wild Geranium
(*Pelargonium australe*) H: 50cm x W: 60cm
A native herbaceous perennial, leaves are pale green, hairy with touches of pink, crimson to purple marking flowers and flowers from October – March.

Wiry panic (*Entolasia stricta*) H 80cm
A wiry grass usually in a upright spreading tuft with short leaves on long stems.



Yellow buttons
(*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*) H:60cm
A perennial herb with silvery felt leaves and golden yellow flowers. Prefers full sun.

Lawn alternatives

Used in access zones such as paths that cross the verge every 3m, the zone 600mm from the face of the kerb use as an alternative to exotic lawn in partial shade with light foot traffic where exotics grasses don't grow so well. Plant spacing is around 20 – 30cm.

Asiatic Pennywort
(*Centella asiatica*) H: 5cm
A dense mat of glossy leaves with clusters of tiny flowers in November to May. Prefers shade. Provides shelter for skinks.



Kidney weeds (*Dichondra repens*) H: 10cm
A low creep forming a dense mat with small, dark green kidney-shaped leaves and tiny white flowers. It grows in sunny spots provided it gets water in dry times. Attracts insects and small lizards.

Native Violet (*Viola hederacea*) H: 15cm
Mat forming habitat with kidney shaped leaves and white and purple flowers in Spring and summer. Prefers moist soil in partial shade to shade.

Small leaved pennywort
(*Hydrocotyle peduncularis*) H:15cm
A creeping perennial forming a dense mat of ivy-shaped leaves with tiny white flowers in September– February



White root (*Pratia purpurascens*) H:15cm
A scrambling groundcover with small green toothed leaves with purple colouring underneath. Small white to purple flowers in spring and summer, prefers moist soil and partial shade to shade. Attracts insects.

Scramblers

Scramblers are great if mass planted (repetition design element), maybe just one species for a good impact. Most scrambler will climb up anything nearby such as telegraph posts, trees and shrubs so they will require pruning to stop climbing or smothering, overhanging footpath or invading access zones.

Apple berry (*Billardiera scandens*)

A scrambling plant with slender stems and cream flowers in September – December followed by purple fruit. Provides fruit for birds and plant food for the larvae (caterpillars) of native butterflies or moths and a nectar source for adult butterflies



Native sarsaparilla (*Hardenbergia violacea*)

Fast growing trailing vine with sprays of purple pea flowers from mid-winter to spring. Growing in full sun to part shade position. Caterpillars eat these leaves and attracts butterflies, moths and native bees feed on the nectar from the flowers. All these insects provide a tasty treat for insect eating birds.

Snake vine (*Hibbertia scandens*)

A sprawling climber with large and showy yellow flowers between April – November. Provides fruit for native birds and attract native bees, beetles and butterflies.

Wombat berry (*Eustrephus latifolius*)

A twining plant but may also occur as a scrambling ground cover, prefers part shade. Flowers are white – purple, drooping with fringed petals.

Shrubs

Ideal for large verges and for planting in the middle of the verge to allow for natural growth and help reduce the need for ongoing pruning particularly around paths and access zones.



Heath Myrtles (*Baeckea imbricata*) H:1m

A small leaf with white to pinkish flowers in Spring and Summer

Cockspur (*Plectranthus parviflorus*) H:60cm

An erect perennial, with tiny white and blueish purple flowers throughout the year for moist shady verges with no foot traffic. Attracts insects.

Heathy Parrot Pea (*Dillwynia retorta*) H:1m

A fine leaved shrub to 1m high, with yellow and reddish-brown flowers in spring. Vapour from burning leaves inhaled to ease breathing difficulties. Full sun to part or dappled shade, prefers sandy (or improved clay) soils.



Paperbark (*Melaleuca thymifolia*) H:1m

A slender wiry stems and fragrant leaves with cork bark and delicate feathery violet-purple flowers. Prefers damp soil. Attracts butterflies.

For further information about
verge gardening in the Inner West, visit
innerwest.nsw.gov.au/VergeGardens

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