City of Perth

Residential Verge Management Guidelines

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Purpose

These guidelines provide explanatory detail about the context and operational application of the Residential Verge Management approach in the City of Perth.

Introduction

The City of Perth encourages owners of single residential properties to install and maintain soft landscaping on the verge directly adjacent to their property to contribute to the aesthetic character of the streetscape, support biodiversity, reduce the use of impervious surfaces, incorporate water sensitive urban design principles and to meet all required safety standards.

The street verge is part of the road reserve and, as such, is under the care, control and management of the City.

Consistent with best practise the guidelines aim to preserve and promote "green" verges throughout the City. Green verges are an important component of the City's streetscapes, which form green corridors that link to parks, reserves and natural bushland areas. Revegetated verges act as 'ecological stepping stones' and assist native animals and birds move throughout the urban landscape. Additionally, verges provide significant mental health benefits to communities who lack immediate access to green space. Verges provide communities with recreational pastimes and spaces where people can interact with their environment and engage with each other. Well-designed areas support beneficial community health outcomes including increased physical activity, mental well-being and social cohesiveness and pedestrian movement.

Environmental benefits include:

- Biodiversity value: Australian native plants provide greater habitat value for wildlife and assist fauna to move through the urban landscape.
- Water infiltration: On-site infiltration of stormwater contributes to the replenishment of groundwater while also reducing the volume of water needing to be managed by the City's stormwater system.
- Carbon reduction: Plants capture and store carbon, removing it from the atmosphere and helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- Urban cooling: Irrigated green verges play an important role in cooling our streets and communities to encourage active transportation options.

Scope

This guideline applies to single residential properties. All applications will be assessed individually to ensure all site-specific parameters are considered.

Please note that verges throughout the City are vastly different, and as such some criteria, setbacks and or other obstacles may make it difficult to implement a greening of the verge. The City will work with residents to develop a solution to suit your verge.

1. Applications for verge development

Permissible verge treatments not requiring approval include live turf and/or prostrate native ground covers with a maximum growth height of 100mm (as outlined in the City of Perth's Thoroughfares and Public Places Local Law 2017).

All other applications for verge treatments must be made to the City in writing from the property owner.

A verge treatment which was installed prior to the commencement day of the City's Thoroughfares and Public Places Local Law 2017 and is a type of verge treatment which was permitted under and complied with the former provisions is a permissible verge treatment providing the treatment remains of the same type and does not present a safety issue or hazard.

The following guidelines will apply to applications for verge development:

1.1. Application Details

Applications must include the following information:

- the address of the property adjoining the verge where the proposed treatment is to be installed;
- a plan to a scale of 1:100 detailing:
  - the proposed work, including all relevant measurements;
  - the location of any footpaths, crossings, street trees, service pits, on street parking and/or other assets, including DBYD drawings (DBYD | Dial Before You Dig (1100.com.au));
  - a plant species list;
  - planting densities;
  - any proposed surface treatments; and
  - the layout of any proposed reticulation system(s).

The City will then:

- inspect the location;
- consider whether the application is compliant with the terms of these guidelines (and any other applicable City policies), any relevant City standards, any relevant laws, and any pedestrian or vehicle safety considerations;
- notify the owner in writing whether the City supports or does not support the proposed landscape development; and
- on completion of any approved works the City will inspect the works to ensure the approved landscape treatment has been installed.

Works not carried out in accordance with the relevant approvals will require any non-compliance issues to be rectified. The City will work together with the applicant to ensure no offence under the Thoroughfares and Public Places Local Law 2017 is committed. Failure to address compliance criteria may result in infringement notices.

A site plan example is shown in Figure 1 below

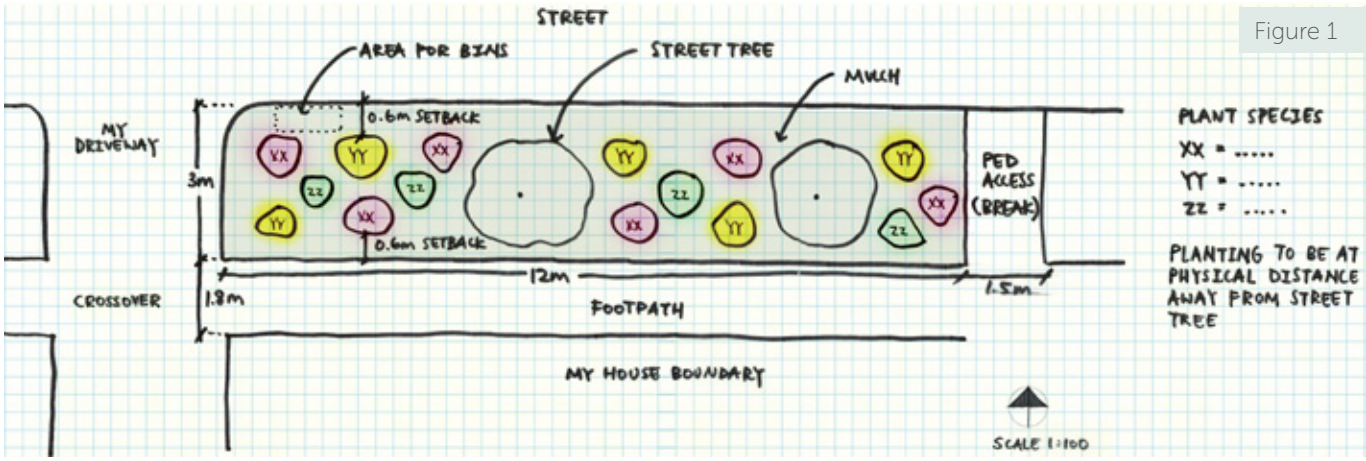

Figure 1

2. Verge Compliance Criteria

Verge treatments (other than street trees) need to be low growing for maintenance of sight lines, be clear of footpaths and provide access for pedestrians and services.

For landscaping proposals to be assessed and approved the following criteria will need to be addressed:

2.1. Setbacks and Clearances

2.1.1. Pedestrian access, e.g. footpaths and clearways shall be maintained across the length of the verge;

2.1.2. Additional paths through the verge shall be constructed of a suitably trafficable material (turf or mulch); and laid flush with the existing footpath, kerb and soil level;

2.1.3. Where a bus stop, furniture or other asset infrastructure exists within a verge, the proposed landscape must provide a minimum 1.5 m access around the asset;

2.1.4. Plants must be placed a minimum distance of 0.6 m away from existing footpaths, crossovers and/or kerbs to limit encroachment. It is important to ensure there is adjacent space available between planting and kerbside parking to provide a landing area for pedestrian comfort and safety;

2.1.5. Sufficient clearances around utility assets e.g. water meters should be maintained to ensure assets are unobstructed and safely accessible for reading and maintenance (note: the water meter should be clear 0.3 m around every side and have at least 1.20 m of open air above);

2.1.6. Planting to be at physical distance away from street trees (to ensure roots are not damaged, and nothing grows up against trunk of tree);

An example of the typical street application of Clearances and Setbacks is show in in Figure 2

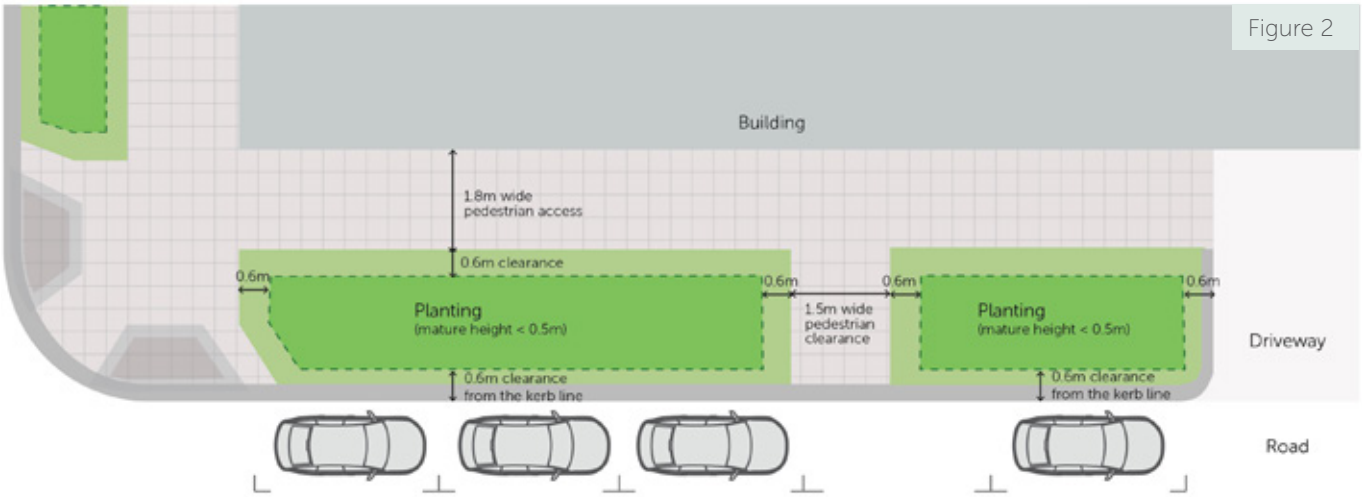

Figure 2

2.2. Plants

2.2.1. Verge treatment are limited to low-growing plants with a mature height of less than 0.5 m;

2.2.2. Hedges or similar borders of plants must not create a complete barrier across the verge and a minimum clearance of 0.5 m is maintained from any existing and / or proposed footpath, and / or crossover and a minimum clearance of 1.0 m from the kerb line;

2.2.3. The proposed landscaping does not create obstructions within the verge;

2.2.4. While planting of native species is encouraged, installation of vegetable gardens on the verge is permissible. Vegetable gardens on the verge should not stockpile waste, mulch or manure and all spent vegetation should be removed. Stakes, lattice and/or supporting structures are not considered appropriate due to safety reasons;

2.2.5. Declared weeds species within the Perth Metropolitan Area are not permissible for planting;

2.2.6. If your verge is lacking a street tree - this can be requested through the following email PKS.INBOX@cityofperth.wa.gov.au, (separately, and or with your verge application). Please note that street tree species in the City of Perth are assigned through the City's Street Tree Guide;

2.3. Water

2.3.1. Where the property owner wishes to install a permanent irrigation system on the verge the water supply is to be from the property which abuts the verge and DBYD maps included in the application;

2.3.2. Reticulation, where proposed, must not present a trip hazard or nuisance to either pedestrians or traffic;

2.3.3. Where approved, all reticulation pipework is to be installed below ground and under footpaths, and sprinklers should not protrude above soil level;

2.3.4. Drip irrigation is the preferred method of irrigation for water conservation. Micro spray irrigation is not supported due to wind and evaporation issues;

2.3.5. Ensure your irrigation is set on the designated watering days www.watercorporation.com.au/Help-and-advice/Watering-days/Find-watering-days-or-report-a-breach/Check-your-watering-days (exemptions are available in newly installed gardens/verges - this needs to be applied for through the Water Corporation - not through the City of Perth).

2.4. Materials

2.4.1. Large particle bark chip or vegetative mulch should be evenly applied to all plantings at a depth of 75 - 100 mm, finishing flush to the kerb, to assist water conservation;

2.4.2. Loose inorganic materials (e.g. gravels / stones / rocks / bricks / sand) will not be supported;

2.5. General

2.5.1. The proposed landscape/landscape treatment does not compromise or have the potential to compromise the longevity of any existing street tree or previously approved landscape treatment;

2.5.2. Appropriate measures are undertaken and maintained to minimise erosion and dust;

2.5.3. Verge treatment shall be kept as per the landscape plan, with weeds treated (manually or chemically) as needed;

2.5.4. Temporary barricades for establishing verge landscaping are acceptable provided that the materials used do not create a hazard and the barrier is identified with an abundance of fluorescent markers suitable for both day and night to ensure the safety of pedestrians;

2.5.5. Barriers must not be erected across pedestrian access ways, or in a manner which creates a sight line barrier / hazard. All barriers should be removed after two weeks;

2.5.6. Landscape design/planting needs to accommodate municipal waste and bulk waste disposal. Storage of bins/bulk waste items on other sites is not supported;

2.5.7. Where two properties share access to the same verge area (sub-divided block) an application to develop/landscape the verge will requires both residential property owners signatures to verify that all issues such as waste collection, kerb side bulk waste issues and/or temporary vehicle storage issues have been discussed and agreed to/resolved;

2.5.8. The construction of tree houses and/or other play structures within the verge/road reserve is not considered appropriate due to safety issues;

2.5.9. Hardstand options are normally not available, and are assessed as part of the City's Thoroughfares and Public Places Local Law 2017 (perth.wa.gov.au/en/council/reports-and-important-documents/local-laws).

3. Verge Assistance Scheme

Limited assistance may be available to residents to develop verges that contribute to the aesthetic presentation of streetscapes and a sustainable quality environment for the benefit of the community.

The Verge Assistance Scheme includes:

- the opportunity to purchase a limited number of price subsidised plants (up to 50 plants annually);
- re-leveling of a verge which presents a safety issue due to a variation in ground height to the adjacent pedestrian footpath (every ten years); and/or
- professional landscape advice (5 yearly).

The availability of the verge development assistance scheme, particularly verge restoration, will be delivered within the limits of the available budget.

Applications under the Verge Assistance Scheme will open each year on the first Monday of March and close on the last Monday of April. Applicants will be advised if their application has been successful and of the support available to them by the end of April in the same year.

Where applications for verge assistance exceed the available budget, the applications will be put on a waiting list for the following year and given preference over any new requests for assistance.

Applications forms for the Verge Assistance Scheme are available on request by emailing info.city@cityofperth.wa.gov.au and will be considered against the following criteria:

- Application must be from the property owner;
- An application for verge restoration will not be considered where building work or activities within the property have damaged the street verge;
- The criteria met by the proposed verge treatment to improve and sustain the streetscape;
- The level of compliance against the compliance criteria; and
- Budget availability.

3.1. Plant subsidy

Residential property owners may apply to purchase subsidised waterwise native plants for landscaping the street verge that abuts their properties. The objective of providing subsidised plants is to encourage residents to support biodiversity, water conservation and the establishment of green corridors to link habitat areas within the Perth Metropolitan area. The City will subsidise a maximum of 50 tube stock plants per property each year. Plants will be available through the native plant subsidy scheme run by an external provider on an annual basis (applications through March to April), with planting in May. Successful applicants will be required to the collect the plants from the external suppliers' premises.

3.2. Verge restoration

Verge restoration work is intended to address any disparity in surface levels between the verge area and the pedestrian pathways, where the buildup of soil/turf over time presents a trip hazard to pedestrians or young cyclists where bike pedals are likely to meet the raised verge area.

Assistance for verge restoration including hand-excavation may be available, provided it will not compromise the root system of adjacent trees. This scheme is available once only every 10 years for individual properties. Existing soil/vegetation is removed from the verge to a depth of 750 mm below kerb/footpath levels and then replaced with fresh topsoil and levelled to achieve a better growing medium for waterwise plantings of low growing shrubs or ground covers other than turf. Large particle bark chip or vegetative mulch may be used to bring the ground surface level to just below adjoining kerbs/footpaths.

Where a vehicular crossover installed on the verge no longer provides direct vehicle access onto private property the crossover is a redundant crossover and will be removed by the City. A verge restoration will include the removal of any redundant crossover identified.

3.3. Landscape design advice

Plant selection advice and landscape design expertise is available to residential property owners requiring or seeking assistance regarding verge landscaping. The City will subsidise assistance to a value of $100. This scheme will be available once in every 5 years for individual properties.

3.4 Verge Development Recognition Awareness Award

The City supports residents' efforts to develop a sustainable verge landscape via a 'Sustainable Verge Awareness' award. On an annual basis, the City will invite nominations for recognition for natural verge landscapes which achieve the objectives of the City's Residential Verge Guidelines.

Nominations will be considered against the following criteria:

- Contribution to urban cooling
- Maintenance
- Any unique aspects
- Biodiversity value
- Waterwise strategies
- Landscape design

The nominations will be assessed by a panel including representation by the community, industry experts, the City's administration and the City's Elected Members.

The nomination must include a clear publishable and signed photo(s) of the verge, and written authorisation for the City to use the photo(s) for publicity purposes.

The winner of the award will receive a gift voucher applicable to local business within the City of Perth.

4. Property Development

If large scale construction is planned, either to your residence or verge ensure the following is adhered to:

- To minimise the risk of tree damage/death a minimum construction clearance of two (2) metres is required from the base of an any existing street tree growing within the verge. Where the proposed excavation is to a depth greater than 100 mm the clearance should be greater than three (3) metres from the base of an existing street tree. For every 100 mm increase in depth the clearance zone should increase by one metre.
- Developers are required to implement AS 4970-2009 for the protection of trees within development sites prior to commencing any development work close to or adjacent to trees growing within the verge.

5. Verge Maintenance

In areas of high visibility, where a property owner(s)/resident(s) are not inclined to maintain the verge adjacent to their property the City will ask the property owner(s)/resident(s) to rectify in line with the Verge Compliance Criteria and their initial application. Where there is failure to comply within the specified time, the City may mow and/or slash vegetation down to ensure continued public safety and to maintain a level of amenity commensurate with the expectations of the community.

6. Non-compliant use

The intent of the Residential Verge Management Guidelines is to provide residents with the opportunity to install and maintain soft landscaping other than permissible treatments outlined in the City's Thoroughfares and Public Places Local Law 2017. Any proposed verge development must maintain a safe environment for the community and must not expose the City of Perth community to increased levels of risk. The following are non-compliant uses:

- The installation of synthetic turf within the verge.
- The unauthorized installation of hard surfaces within the verge area.
- Landscaping that has thorns, spear like leaves or plants that are known to be toxic. Landscaping that impedes sightlines / public access is not permitted within the verge.
- The construction or installation of structures (including rockeries and garden ornaments), within the verge.
- The installation/construction of tree houses and other play structures or equipment within the verge.
- Tethering boats, trailers and/or any other items to street trees, street lights and/or road signs within the road reserve.
- The installation of hard landscaping elements such as borders and/or planter boxes including around existing mature street trees is not permitted due to the number of trees which have been compromised due to excavations within the root zones to accommodate footings.
- The long-term parking and/or storage of vehicles including caravans/boats/trailers within the verge area.

7. Former City of Nedlands and City of Subiaco Residential Areas

Under transitional provisions contained in the City's Thoroughfares and Public Places Local Law 2017, verge treatments that were installed prior to 9 June 2017 in former City of Nedlands and City of Subiaco residential areas which were permitted in these areas remain permissible if the verge treatment stays the same and does not present a safety issue or hazard.

8. Obligations of the property owner

The ongoing maintenance of the verge treatment approved by the City (excluding any street tree) is the responsibility of the resident. The verge treatment must be kept in a good and tidy condition and must not obstruct the footpath or carriageway adjoining the verge.

Where a verge treatment is identified to present an immediate safety issue or hazard, the City will make the street verge safe within 24 hours and request (in writing) the property owner to carry out other remedial works within 14 days of notification.

9. Power to carry out public works on a verge

Underground service provision such as power, water, gas and telecommunications are assigned standard alignments within the road reserve and typically these are between 0.0 and 5.0 metres from the property boundary. As these are in the verge, service utilities need to access them from time to time to maintain and/or repair services. Occasionally, the City may also need to do works on the verge. If the verge is disturbed, the service utility of the City may backfill with sand and is not liable to replace or restore any verge treatment of sprinklers, pipes, reticulation or other equipment.

10. Useful links

Waterwise plant selector - Waterwise Plants Perth & WA | Water Saving & Drought Tolerant Plants
www.watercorporation.com.au/Waterwise/Waterwise-plants

Waterwise garden advice - Waterwise Gardening Advice | How to Save Water in the Garden
www.watercorporation.com.au/Waterwise/Waterwise-advice/Garden

Waterwise verge advice - Your Guide to Creating a Waterwise Verge
pw-cdn.watercorporation.com.au/-/media/WaterCorp/Documents/Water-Care/Waterwise-Advice/Your-guide-to-creating-a-waterwise-verge.pdf?rev=83fcddae0d5d4d4295bb15ca4d8b589f

11. Glossary of Terms

Approved verge treatment	Any verge treatment other than a permissible verge treatment, as defined below, which has been approved by the local government.
Green verge	Refers to a verge that has been treated with a Soft Landscaping treatment, as defined below.
Hard landscaping	Refers to retaining structures or edging / borders. Does not include paving.
Hazardous plants	Plants with thorns, spear like leaves or plants which are known to be toxic; or which are listed weeds.
Paving	Refers to clay or concrete paving or any manufactured materials used for footpaths or hardstand for parking of vehicles.
Permissible verge treatment	The verge treatment(s) identified in the City of Perth Thoroughfares and Public Places Local Law 2017 as being permissible.
Soft landscaping	Refers to grass, ground cover and low shrubs. It does not include artificial / synthetic turf or plants.
Street tree	Any tree growing within the road reserve.
Street verge	That part of a thoroughfare between the carriageway and the land which abuts the thoroughfare but does not include any footpath.
Suitably trafficable material	Suitable trafficable material includes the following: • turf; or • mulch.
Verge restoration	the removal of any existing treatment and hand-excavation of soil up to 200 mm below existing paved levels. Top soil is placed and levelled, with an allowance of 75 -100 mm for mulch, to ensure mulch is flush with existing paving (footpath, crossover, kerbing etc.).
Verge treatment	Any modification made to the portion of street verge not occupied by a footpath or crossover. Typically involves the planting of grass, ground covers or low shrubs and may include reticulation or paving.

Contact Us

This document is available in other formats or languages on request.

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