

Verge Landscape Guidelines



Contents

Acknowledgements

The City acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land, water and community. We pay our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures; and to Elders both past, present and emerging.

Be Waterwise

These guidelines have been created with reference to the Water Corporation's "Waterwise verge best practice guidelines". For more information visit <https://www.watercorporation.com.au/Waterwise>

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What is a Street Verge?

A street verge is the area of land which lies between the boundary of the property line and the edge of the road. This portion of land is owned by the Crown but is vested in Council to ensure the verge is not mistreated or damaged.



The purpose of a street verge is to provide a buffer between the road and private property where common public infrastructure such as footpaths, bus stops and trees may be placed. They also provide a section of land where essential services such as power, water, gas and telecommunications can be located. These services are generally located below ground.

The City is responsible for enforcing verge requirements and ensuring utilities located beneath the ground surface are protected and able to be accessed by the City and utility providers.

Who is responsible for the verge?

Residents are responsible for maintaining the verge in front of their homes and corner side verges if their home is located on a corner. Residents are encouraged to maintain the verge area, as an extension of their gardens!



Residents are permitted to undertake improvements to the verge in line with the local law and these guidelines. A written application must be made to the City. Refer to Planning Your Verge Landscape section of this guideline for further information.

The City is responsible for verge mowing and weed spraying on major roads and associated public open spaces. These tasks are conducted by the City in accordance with agreed levels of service, to reduce sight risk hazards and to reduce excessive fuel loads that may pose a fire risk.

The City is also responsible for the Planting and pruning of Street Trees for further information please follow the link:
<https://www.armadale.wa.gov.au/management-trees>

Improving your verge!

The City of Armadale encourages residents to improve and maintain their verge(s) to help beautify local streets and reap the benefits of better streetscapes.

Verge improvement options include:

- Planting trees, small shrubs, groundcovers and grasses*
- Using mulch and ground covers
- Mow or trim your verge regularly
- Encourage your neighbours to plant their verge
- Organise verge clean ups
- Keep reading this guideline for more handy information!

* *Trees should be planted by the City and can be requested via the City's website.*

Planting and maintaining trees, shrubs and grasses along the verge can have a positive impact on your local area. There are several social, environmental and economic benefits of landscaping and maintaining your verge.



Benefits of better streetscapes...

Social Benefits

Streets with trees and planted areas are aesthetically pleasing and create a positive environment, which encourages outdoor activity and walking for residents.

Walkable neighbourhoods are safer and promote more social interaction between neighbours.

Environmental Benefits

Lawns, shrubs and trees encourage local biodiversity by providing habitat and a food source for birds.

Planted areas cool the air temperature around homes by shading the soil from the direct sun and through evapotranspiration assisting with urban heat reduction.

Planted areas also assist in the infiltration of storm water.

Verges are calculated in the stormwater management plans to be permeable (planting or turf).

Economic Benefits

Development, improvement and enhancement of your verge promote a sense of pride within the community.

Property values increase in areas where streetscapes have been landscaped and are well looked after.

If you are considering making changes to the landscape of the verge area you should be aware that there are restrictions on what changes can be made. The Local Law that applies to the verge area is *Activities and Trading in Thoroughfares and Public Places*.

Planning Steps

1. Familiarise yourself with this document ‘**City’s Verge Landscaping Guidelines**’
2. Be aware of existing features and services. Consult the ‘**Dial Before You Dig**’ service, which helps home owners avoid potential damages to any surrounding infrastructure asset(s) when undertaking landscaping projects on the verge.
3. **Design** your verge landscape
4. **Submit your landscaping plan to Council for approval**

Items to consider:

1. It is important that planted areas do not obstruct access for pedestrians.
2. Trees must be an approved species, suitable for the area and planted in a specific alignment to protect underground services (2.7 – 3m from property boundary)
3. Planted areas must not obstruct line of sight along the roadway or create any hazards for people or vehicles particularly near the entry to your driveway and near corners.
4. There must be access for servicing utilities (like power, water or phone cables) and meter reading, postal delivery and other similar services.
5. Allow space for easy access to your wheelie bins on collection day.
6. Allocate space to put out materials for annual green waste or household rubbish collections.
7. Reticulation needs to be well covered. Any sprinkler heads must sit below the soil surface.
8. Do not obstruct access for pedestrians and servicing utilities (e.g., power, water or phone cables)

All residents of the City of Armadale wishing to alter their verge area will need to submit a landscape plan that requires approval. The plan must be approved prior to commencement of any works being carried out on the verge and in accordance with the below guidelines.



General Information

1. Site boundaries.
2. Location of road kerb, driveway, light pole, footpath, fencing, paving existing vegetation, verge tree and any other above ground installation.
3. Clearly show the address, name and contact details of the property owner.

Key showing

1. List the botanical names of the proposed plants, plant numbers and location.
2. All proposed materials to be used such as mulch, paving, aggregates (split pea gravel etc.)
3. Identification of existing or proposed street tree/s
4. Existing vegetation (species and location), including those proposed to be removed.

Refer to page 25 for example Verge Landscape Plans.



Send your landscaping plan along with the Landscape Verge Application form the City of Armadale Parks Design via post or email to info@armadale.wa.gov.au

The Landscape Verge Application form can be download from the City's website - <https://www.armadale.wa.gov.au/verge-landscape-approval-form>

Your landscape plan is usually assessed and a response returned within 10 working days from the date it is received.

Please Note:

The landholder should also be aware that the City and utility providers may need to access the services for repairs and maintenance within the verge and are not required to replace any landscaping during this process.

Plants

- The City prefers the use of waterwise and/or local native plants.
- Plants shall have a maximum height of 750mm. Should the plant grow taller it will need to be pruned back.
- If there is no footpath on the verge, plants must be planted a minimum of 2m from the back of the kerb. The plants shall be maintained so that a minimum 1.5m wide strip is clear and suitable for foot traffic. The area behind the back of kerb may be grass, low growing groundcovers, paving, mulch, or other approved surface.

Surface Materials

- Brick paving is permitted – however only one-third (1/3) of the total verge can be paved (excluding the crossover). If this material is proposed, it can be laid in any layout design. Use of gravel is restricted by our local law
- Mulches – 100mm thick. The finished level must be level with the road kerb and the adjoining ground levels, so as not to spill over onto the roadway. Any of the organic mulches, such as pine bark mulch, shall have a maximum particle size of 75mm.
- Use of gravel, split pea gravel or decorative stone aggregates is restricted by local laws. Seek advice from our project officer for use on this material.

Refer to City of Armadale website (*Council > Publications and Governance > Delegations and Council Policies*) Policy Manual - ENG 5.



Non-permissible verge treatments



The following are unacceptable verge treatments:

- Synthetic lawns are not permitted in the City of Armadale as the process of laying it creates an impervious layer which absorbs and traps heat, significantly contributing to heat island effect. You may see houses that have installed this material without consultation with the council.
- Plants - Thorny plants e.g., Roses, Bougainvillea or Cactus, poisonous plants or a declared weed(s)
- Plants over 750mm high
- Built structures such as raised garden beds, fencing, retaining walls or fixed structures
- Ponds, fountains or water features
- Loosely placed materials with a particle size exceeding 25mm such as bricks and stones.
- Materials that protrude from the surface such as star pickets, sprinklers, large rocks
- Garden edging or retaining exceeding 50mm in height

Non-compliant verge treatments



The City may request that a street verge landscape treatment be restored to meet the guidelines or that the verge treatment be removed if it was installed without the City's approval and non-permissible treatments were used or it did not comply with the City's guidelines.

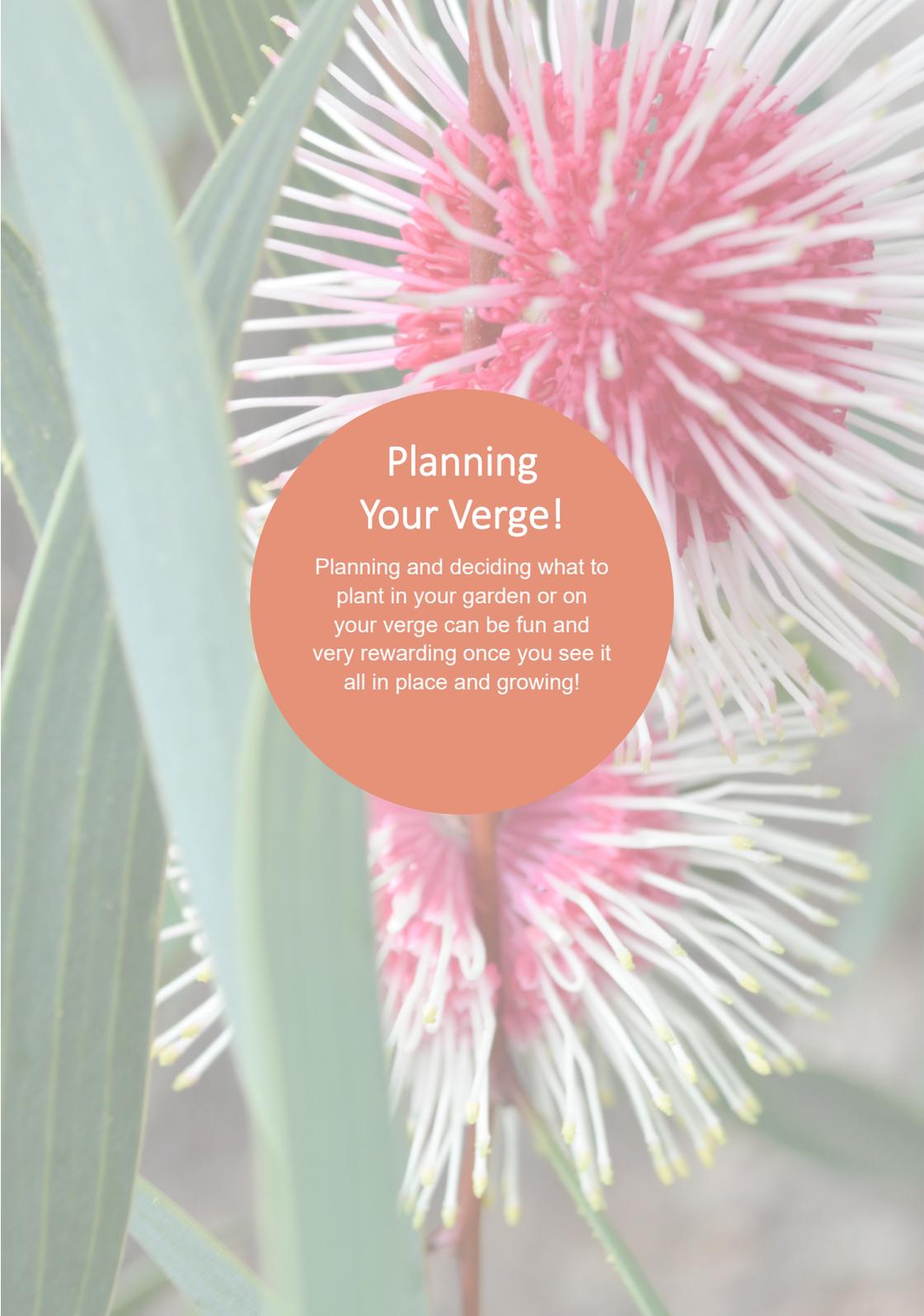
- The property owner or occupier adjacent to the non-compliant street verge landscape shall bear the sole cost of any remedial work.
- A period of 20 working days shall be granted for the street verge treatment to be adjusted or removed from the date of a written notice issued by the City to do so. However, if a verge landscape treatment is deemed a safety hazard by the City, it must be altered or removed within 7 days of receiving written advice to do so.
- If written advice is given, and the adjustment or removal has not taken place in the stated timeframe, the City may, at its discretion, remove the treatment and dispose of the materials so removed. Costs of such removal and disposal of the material may be charged to the owner of the adjacent property.



It is the adjacent landholders' responsibility to maintain the verge so that footpaths, roadways and sightlines remain free from obstructions at all times.

Specifically, the landholder must:

- Keep the verge treatment in a good and tidy condition and ensure any gardens or lawns are not obstructing any footpaths or road.
- Ensure any verge treatment does not cause a physical or sight obstruction for anyone crossing the verge or using the footpath on the verge.
- Not disturb or damage any existing kerbs, footpaths, infrastructure or trees.
- Ensure any irrigation and sprinklers installed are unobtrusive to people using the thoroughfare and do not cause nuisance or obstruct. Any sprinkler heads must sit below the soil surface so they do not become trip hazards for others walking across your verge.



Planning Your Verge!

Planning and deciding what to plant in your garden or on your verge can be fun and very rewarding once you see it all in place and growing!

Planning Your Verge Garden

A little research and sound planning go a long way toward creating your successful garden!



Think about what is important to you in a garden?

- What will your budget allow for? From installation to ongoing upkeep.
- What level of maintenance are you willing to keep up?
- Are you planning a “Waterwise” garden?
- How will you keep your garden watered, reticulation system or by hand?
- Will you need to install and hardscapes such as edging or pathways?
- Do you want to attract birds into your garden?

Where to get help?

You can get lots of help and advice from staff at local garden centres, hardware stores and nurseries, shop local as the staff are likely to understand your local conditions. Books, websites and even social media groups can also be a great source of information. Ensure that you are referencing locally based sites as the same plant can behave quite differently in a different climate.

When considering what plants to purchase aim to work with the conditions you have. The further removed from its natural conditions a plant is, the harder it is to maintain. For example it's not impossible to create a tropical style haven in Armadale but it will require a great deal of ongoing maintenance and water to keep it looking good and healthy.

The following information will assist you in choosing the right plant for the right place:

- What type of soil do you have – is it sandy and light or clay and rocky?
- Which way does the garden bed or verge face and how much shade or direct sun does it get?
- Do you get frosts in winter or extreme heat in summer that might damage more delicate plants?
- How big is the area you are trying to cover? Having a drawn plan with measurements will assist you in purchasing the correct quantities of soil improvers and plants.

Plants suited to our climate need less water, are low maintenance and will look great in your garden. Use the Water Corporation Directory to find Waterwise plants that will grow best where you live.



Getting Started!

Once you have approval for landscaping your verge - The first step in preparing for planting will be to remove all the weeds from the verge.

If your verge hasn't been planted for a long time, it may be very compacted which makes it hard for plants to develop a root system. While you are pulling up those weeds, break up the first 20cm layer of soil to allow water, nutrients and plant roots to penetrate.



Local soils are prone to becoming hydrophobic, where they actually repel water. This prevents water and nutrient from penetrating the soil surface and reaching the plants root zone. Water is then lost by run off and evaporation.

Unfortunately, this common problem requires ongoing management. It is highly recommended to apply a wetting agent at planting and at the beginning of each season Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. This will minimise waste and ensure the water is available to the plants.

This problem can be easily detected by pouring a bucket of water into the area. If the water stays on the surface or does not quickly seep into the soil a wetting agent will assist.

Improving Your Soil

Improving your soil before planting is essential and will help plants to establish. Well established plants grow to be stronger specimens over time, saving you money and effort in the long term by not having to replace them.

The following are recommended soil improvers and planting materials:

- Bags of compost or soil conditioner
- Wetting agent – liquid or granular
- Slow release fertiliser like blood and bone or Osmocote for native plants
- A pile of mulch – you can use organic mulch like shredded tree pruning's or wood chips. This is applied to the soil surface after planting.





Consult your local garden experts, take note of plants in other peoples gardens and verge areas that are doing well (take photos to help in identifying them). These plants are likely to do well in your garden!

Selection Tips

- Finding plants that naturally grow locally is one way to get better results. Many of our local plants are very hardy and are used to getting little water during our hot dry summer.
- Remember if there is no street tree on your verge area you are required to allow a 2m square space for the City to plant one. There are some positioning constraints that the City can advise when you are planning. Trees provide summer shade, cooling the land surface temperature. This can help reduce watering costs in the future summer shade. This may help reduce watering costs in the future. The City will provide and plant a tree for FREE!
- Follow the link for an application form <https://www.armadale.wa.gov.au/verge-tree-request>
- Most importantly, check the size of the plants at maturity and make sure your area is suitable.
- Cost Cutting – Many Native plants are available as tube stock from your local nursery. Buying tube stock costs much less than buying a more established plant/s, but they do require more patience for visible results. Perhaps a combination of a few larger features surrounded by tube stock would be an option.
- Select Waterwise plants – view the Water Corporations website <https://www.watercorporation.com.au/Waterwise/Waterwise-plants>

The best time to plant is from late April to October as the weather is cooler and winter rain will help plants establish.



Planting Tips

For successful planting, follow these simple steps:

1. Dig the hole twice the width and depth of the pot
2. Mix 50% soil improver into the existing soil (A blend of compost and manure)
3. Throw in a small handful of fertiliser
4. Add wetting agent and fill the hole up with water, allow to drain
5. Backfill the bottom of the hole with the improved soil mix
6. Place your plant in the hole ensuring that the soil level of the pot is in line with the existing soil level.
7. Infill the hole with the remaining improved soil mix.
8. Put a 5 - 10cm layer of mulch on top, ensuring it is not touching the stem.
9. Reapply wetting agent and water in thoroughly.

Watering Your Verge Garden

We use over 40% of our water in the garden! Consider planting a Waterwise garden while reducing your water use.

Watering Systems

Regularly watering your verge plants will keep them looking healthy and improve the appearance of your property. When deciding how to deliver water to your garden you need to consider the size of the verge area, your budget and your available time.

Ideally your Waterwise verge won't need a permanent irrigation system to be installed. However if you do decide on irrigation - automated reticulation systems are the most convenient but can be expensive to install. Installing a system yourself will help to reduce the cost. Spend the time to research systems to find one that suits your needs. Please note that reticulation on the verge area should sit below the soil surface (sub surface drip irrigation recommended). Hand watering is more cost effective but is time consuming if you have a large verge area. This method can also make it difficult to ensure consistency in the amount of water delivered.

How Much Water?

Verge Trees need to be watered regularly for at least the first two years after planting in order to establish. A minimum of 50 litres per week for a 35lt tree is required, additional hand watering may be needed during extended periods of hot weather.

Once Native and Mediterranean plants are established will usually only require 1-2 watering's of approximately 10 – 15 minutes per week. Please ensure sprinklers are only used on Water Corporation approved watering days.



Mulch

Applying mulch to your garden is recommended. The mulch helps to reduced water loss through evaporation and also keeps the surface of the soil cool.

Choose a mulch with irregularly shaped particle sizes as it will allow water and nutrients to travel through it effectively. Some fine mulches may become compacted and water repellent.

Mulch should be applied 5 – 10cm thick. Keep mulch several centimetres away from the trunk of all plants, to avoid fungal diseases. Organic mulch (wood chips) may need to be reapplied once a year in late spring, as it will eventually break down into the soil.

For more handy water saving tips, garden design ideas and videos on how to makeover your verge visit the Water Corporation website.



How the City can help?

Request a Street Tree

The City of Armadale's Street Tree Request program allows residents to apply for trees to be planted on the verge adjoining their property. The can be done by submitting a Request a Street Tree form which can be found at <https://www.armadale.wa.gov.au/verge-tree-request> Please note that applications close November of each calendar year (for planting the following winter).

Annual Native Plants for Residents

A plant giveaway event for residents is held each year, typically end of autumn to beginning of winter. Details are advertised on the City's website closer to the time. Please remember to bring your rates notice as identification.

Mulch

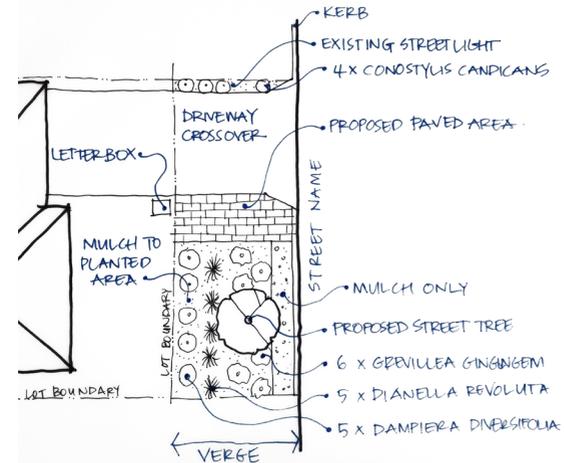
Residents can obtain mulch from the Armadale Landfil and Recycling Facility at 145 Hopkinson Road – HILBERT. Please note you will need to provide two forms of identification

- FREE - Self Loaded Trailer up to 3m3 (between 9am and 4pm)
- FREE – Machine Loaded Trailer (Tuesday mornings between 9am and noon) for City of Armadale Pensioners ONLY – pension card and photo ID required
- Loaded by machine (between 9am and 4pm) – Minimum Charge – per tonne please check the City's Current Tipping Fees for price

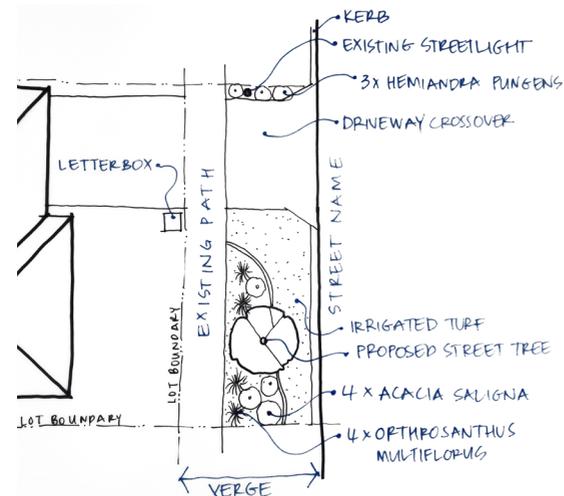


Example Verge Landscape Plan

The verge landscape plan doesn't need to be fancy! Just sketch your ideas and send into the City for consideration!



Example A - Verge Landscape Plan with no footpath



Example B - Verge Landscape Plan with footpath



Thank You

for taking the time to consider
your verge landscape and
should you require any further
information please don't
hesitate to call
9394 5000 or email the City
Parks Design
info@armadale.wa.gov.au

*The glory of gardening:
hands in the dirt, head in the
sun, heart with nature.
To nurture a garden is to
feed not just the body,
but the soul.*

— Alfred Austin




CITY OF Armadale