

Naturestrip *Guidelines Booklet*

MELTON SHIRE



A VIBRANT, PROUD AND HEALTHY
COMMUNITY OFFERING LIFESTYLE CHOICES

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Introduction

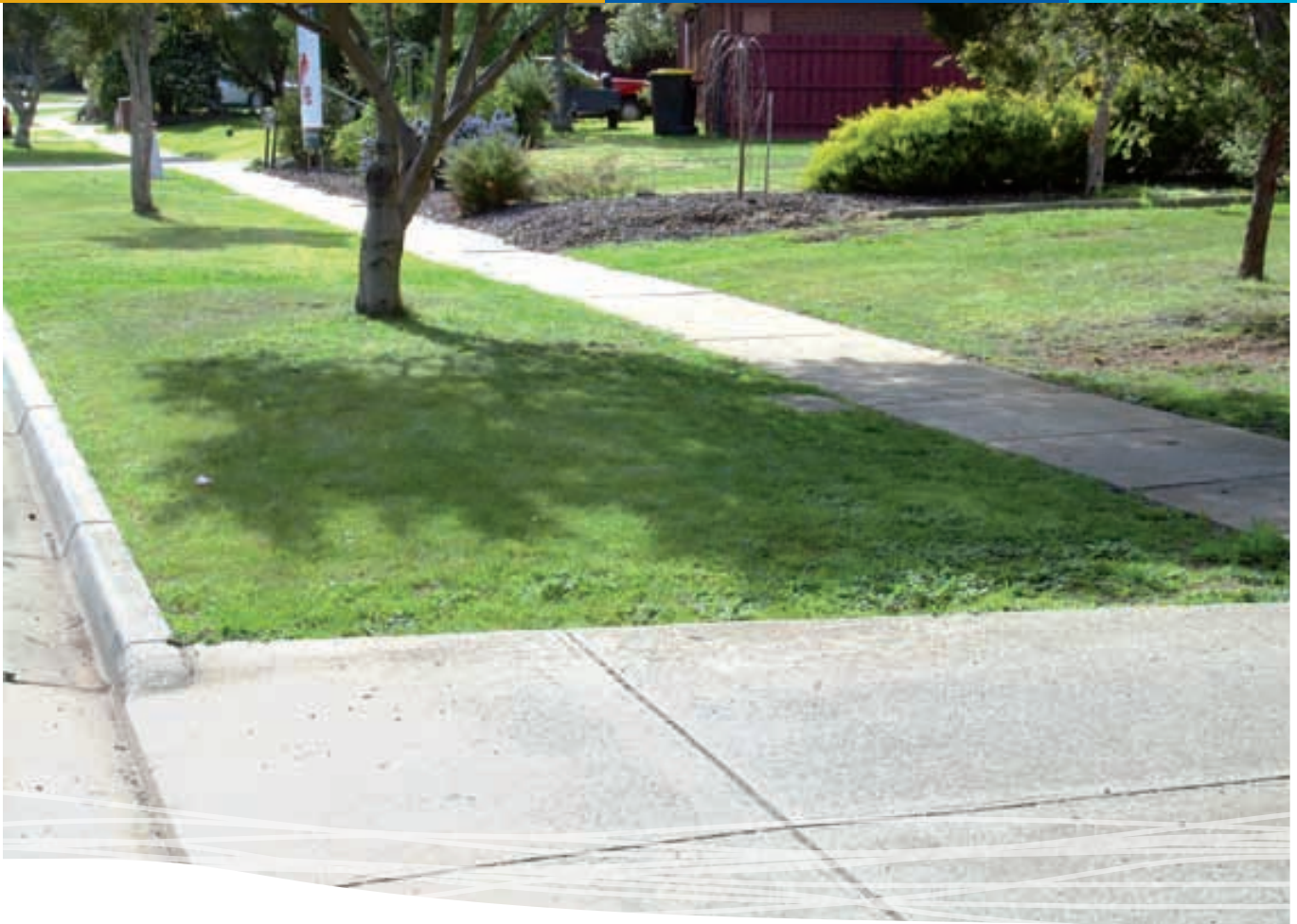
The Shire of Melton is a municipality with a great variety of street types. The variation of urban, suburban, semi rural and rural streets and roads create an interesting and valuable street landscape.

Over recent years, the role of water in the environment has had a particular impact on the landscape of the Shire. The introduction of water restrictions has heightened the important role of water in our urban and rural landscape and promoted the responsible use of this precious resource.

The traditional street is comprised of road carriageway, naturestrip and footpath (although many variations exist in the Shire). Over recent times, there has been a move towards using alternative treatments on our naturestrips in the belief that it is more aesthetically pleasing and/or a more responsible use of water.

Naturestrips play an important role in the aesthetic, environmental and social health of our Shire. This document outlines the types and benefits of naturestrips and is intended to offer residents and landowners in the Shire of Melton guidance and information on their care and maintenance.

It can be read in conjunction with Melton Shire Council's Landscaping Guidelines, which offers more detailed information on Council process and policies with regard to street landscapes in general.



What is a naturestrip?

The term commonly refers to the area of public land between the property boundary and the road kerb or shoulder in roads and streets. This includes the strips of public land on the sides of corner properties.

This space provides for a variety of uses, some of which compliment each other and others, which have conflicting uses. They are the location for services such as telephone, gas, water and sewerage, as well as power (sometimes above ground on poles, sometimes below ground) and public lighting.

Naturestrips are an important part of our urban infrastructure as they provide safe and direct access for service personnel such as postal staff and service maintenance staff, as well as providing a flat and stable location for the placement of refuse and recycling bins.

A naturestrip provides the location for a footpath and allows safe and unimpeded access along property frontages for the public. They allow space for, amongst other things, the opening of car doors, space for a child's pusher, pram or a wheelchair to move in and out of a car.

"Naturestrips provide an open space that allows open viewing lines for vehicle traffic and cyclists at intersections, driveways and curves."

In many inner urban areas there are no naturestrips as the footpath goes all the way to the kerb. In most rural areas, there is no footpath between the property boundary and the road edge.

■ Who is responsible for maintaining naturestrips?

It is the responsibility of the resident to maintain the naturestrip abutting their property. Normally this is by regular mowing, weeding and picking up litter.

The Shire of Melton relies on the good will and established community expectation that residents will mow and/or otherwise maintain the naturestrip in order to present a neat and tidy street frontage. Council does not carry out renovation or maintenance (including mowing and watering) of naturestrips.

If the naturestrip becomes damaged following service authority works, such as water, gas, electricity, communication facility works or as a result of building work the service authority or builder is responsible for naturestrip repairs and reinstatement.

Where Service Authorities or Contractors are required to undertake works that require the removal or disruption of objects, plants or other things on road reserves and footpaths that have been installed by the resident, the Service Authority or Contractor will only be required to reinstate the road reserve or footpath to normal condition ie: not the augmented condition.

Minor changes in soil levels can be expected due to the reactive nature of the clay soils found in the Shire and seasonal rainfall fluctuations.

It must be noted that while this document outlines ways in which alternative treatments to soil and grass may be achieved, there is no such thing as a maintenance free naturestrip. All treatments that are permissible by the Shire of Melton will require some maintenance by the resident of the abutting property. This document provides an indication of what these maintenance requirements may include.

Where residents do not maintain naturestrips and naturestrips become unsightly, Council under *The General Local Law* will ensure that the resident is aware of his/her responsibility and that the naturestrip is maintained in order to present a neat and tidy street.

“Naturestrips provide the opportunity for the development of good streetscape character and for the growth of street trees. They compliment the natural settings of the neighbourhood and provide a valuable habitat for fauna whilst visually softening the effect of the harder surfaces of road, footpath and driveway paving, fences and buildings.”

■ Benefits of a naturestrip

An open, unpaved area of land allows for the penetration of rainwater and air into the soil, improving soil health, promoting healthy growth of street and garden trees and to allow water to enter the water table. Unpaved naturestrips reduce the amount of stormwater runoff experienced during rainfall events and reduces the amount of pollution transported by stormwater into waterways.

Naturestrips provide the opportunity for the development of good streetscape character and for the growth of street trees. They compliment the natural settings of the neighbourhood and provide a valuable habitat for fauna whilst visually softening the effect of the harder surfaces of road, footpath and driveway paving, fences and buildings. Naturestrips also provide a safe passage for pedestrian traffic away from vehicular traffic.



What options are available for landscaping naturestrips?

Council supports beautification of naturestrips provided that the underlying purposes of the naturestrip can be maintained whilst ensuring the ongoing safety of the general public.

When a resident wishes to make changes to the current naturestrip treatment, the cost of these changes is to be borne by the resident. Three options or a combination of the three options are available for consideration as follows:

- Option 1 – Grass
- Option 2 – Approved Plantings
- Option 3 – Approved Permeable Surface Material

■ Option 1 (Default) – Grass

Traditionally, mown turf naturestrips are the most common form of naturestrip treatment in the Shire of Melton. They offer the resident and Council a low maintenance and low cost form of naturestrip.

During recent years, the use of water to irrigate lawns in the Shire of Melton has been restricted due to water restrictions. While this has been necessary for water conservation reasons, it is only in the summer months that the restrictions have a visual impact on the streetscape.

The use of new drought tolerant grasses in the construction of new naturestrips ensures that the naturestrip will remain in better horticultural health throughout the year, than other grass species. There will be some seasonal variation, but in general the naturestrip will remain low maintenance and good looking year round.

Seasonal variation may mean the grass dies back and browns off at certain times dependent on the species, however the grass will grow back with minimal maintenance other than regular mowing.

■ Option 2 – Approved Plantings

An alternative to grass is a planted and mulched naturestrip. This provides a soft and visually pleasing alternative (when well maintained). This treatment involves the use of the naturestrip area as a garden bed with the area being mulched with organic mulch and planted with low growing native plants.

This is usually done in the belief that it is low in water use and low in maintenance. Plants should be hardy, low growing, low maintenance and have low water requirements. The treatment of the naturestrip in this manner must allow for the safe passage of pedestrians.

As the garden bed is a non-trafficable surface, it prohibits the passage of pedestrian traffic; so non-planted buffer zones must be maintained in line with the Design Guidelines found in **Appendix 1**.

The basic guidelines are as follows:

- A minimum footpath width of 1.5m is to be retained and kept clear at all times;
- A minimum buffer zone of 1.0m from the back of kerb is to be retained and kept clear at all times;
- One approved street tree (refer to street tree guidelines);
- Approved plantings are to be maintained below a height of 300mm – refer to Appendix 2 Approved Plantings list;
- Hard landscaping elements such as rocks, timber, retaining walls, ornaments must not be used;
- Mulch material must be kept stable and properly contained. Recommended treatments include granitic sand and finely ground organic mulch, such as soft fall material. Larger materials such as stones or crushed rock greater than 10mm or chunky woodchips are not to be used;
- Timber edging can be used to contain material provided it is not raised above natural surface level;
- Irrigation systems must not be placed within the naturestrip.

While it is generally assumed that this type of treatment is cheap to install and easy to maintain when compared with the other alternatives, in reality the opposite is true. This is the most expensive option to install, and is the alternative that has the highest maintenance requirements over the long term.

This cost must be borne by the resident. In addition, this treatment typically lasts only 5 – 10 years before significant re-work is required to keep the benefit of the treatment and prevent the naturestrip becoming unsightly or weed infested.

Ongoing maintenance, (as with lawn mowing) is required to be undertaken by the residents. In 5 – 10 years, most of the organic mulch will have broken down through natural processes and need replacement at the cost of the resident. In summary, the initial cost can be expected to be required again within 10 years should this alternative be chosen.

■ Option 3 – Permeable surface ie: granitic sand or similar

A further alternative to grass naturestrips is a permeable surface treatment such as granitic sand or similar graded material. While this treatment does not require watering or mowing, it will require periodic weeding and maintenance.

As noted earlier there is no such thing as a maintenance free naturestrip. Being an inorganic material, this naturestrip treatment option is low maintenance but comes at a higher upfront cost and maybe disagreeable in appearance to some residents. The glare of the summer sun and the reflection generated by this treatment should be taken into account when considering this option.

The laying of a material such as this requires more material, labour and skill than a grass treatment. The area will need to be excavated to approximately 100mm below top of kerb and particular care must be taken not to disturb the roots of existing street trees (hand excavation will be required at the base of street trees). The excavated area is then filled with a 50mm layer of recycled crushed brick or crushed rock no greater than 20mm in particle size. This base layer must be compacted using a 'wacker plate' or other form of compaction such as a water filled roller. This will provide a firm base for the top layer.

A final 50mm layer of granitic sand or similar approved graded material no greater than 10mm maximum particle size is then placed and compacted (avoiding the root zone of existing street trees) into a level surface, gently graded to the kerb to allow for drainage purposes. The smaller particle size of the final layer provides a more compact surface and reduces the likelihood of material being spread onto the adjoining footpath or road.

Design Guidelines for this treatment can be found in Appendix 1.



Approximate Costs for Treatment Options

The below table provides an estimate of the approximate costs to install each of the three treatment options for comparison purposes. They are estimates only and may vary depending on the actual treatment and extent of treatment and are to be used as a guide only.

<p>OPTION 1 Grass</p>	<p>\$10.00*</p>
<p>OPTION 2 Approved Plantings</p>	<p>\$50.00*</p>
<p>OPTION 3 Approved Permeable Surface</p>	<p>\$25.00*</p>

**Cost per square metre. Estimated cost is based on 2007 prices.*

■ Unacceptable items within naturestrips

Council will not permit irrigation systems to be placed in naturestrips. Council will not permit rocks, bluestone pitchers, retaining walls, edgings raised higher than natural service level, water features, letterboxes or other objects deemed as an obstruction to be placed in naturestrips. These are all potentially hazardous and are not to be included in any naturestrip landscaping scheme.

Only approved plantings listed in Appendix 2 and permeable surfaces detailed in Appendix 1 are to be used, Council will not consider other plantings or surface materials.

■ What about street trees?

Street trees are provided by Council as set out in Councils Tree Planting and Removal policy. As a guide, one tree per frontage and up to two trees per sideage (corner blocks) can be planted in residential naturestrips. These must be a species approved by Council. Street trees are generally planted in the centre of the naturestrip with due regard for the maintenance of services and sight clearance lines for traffic with an offset no less than 1m from the back of kerb.

To request a street tree, please contact Councils Customer Service Unit on 9747 7200.

Council carries out pruning and clearance of street trees in accordance with relevant maintenance specifications or management plans.

■ Approval Process

If you plan to do anything other than grow grass (Option 1), you will need permission from the Shire of Melton. A written application must be made detailing the following:

- Property owner details;
- Property address;
- Proposed landscaping;
- Sketch outlining proposal (refer to Appendix 1 – Design Guidelines);
- List of plants to be used (refer to Appendix 2 – Approved Plantings List).

This application is to be addressed to:

Naturestrip Landscaping Application Shire of Melton, PO Box 21, Melton 3337

Work is not to commence on any alterations to the naturestrip without written consent from Council. Once an approval is obtained residents are advised to call "Dial before you dig" on ph: 1100 to determine the location of underground services within the naturestrip area. Prior to commencing any work in the naturestrip a "Road Opening Permit" must be obtained from Council as per the requirements of the Road Management Act 2004.

"Any feature that is deemed by the Shire of Melton to be a Risk to the public as a tripping hazard, a falling hazard, obstruction or other hazard, may be removed from the naturestrip without consultation or warning."

■ Risk Management & Safety

The Shire of Melton is very much aware of the need to provide a safe environment within urban and rural areas within the municipality. As the naturestrip is public land, the Shire of Melton must be vigilant when it comes to recognising when a threat to public safety exists.

Any feature that is deemed by the Shire of Melton to be a risk to the public as a tripping hazard, a falling hazard, obstruction or other hazard, may be removed from the naturestrip without consultation or warning. If you plan to do anything other than grow grass, you will need permission from the Shire of Melton (refer to "Approval Process").

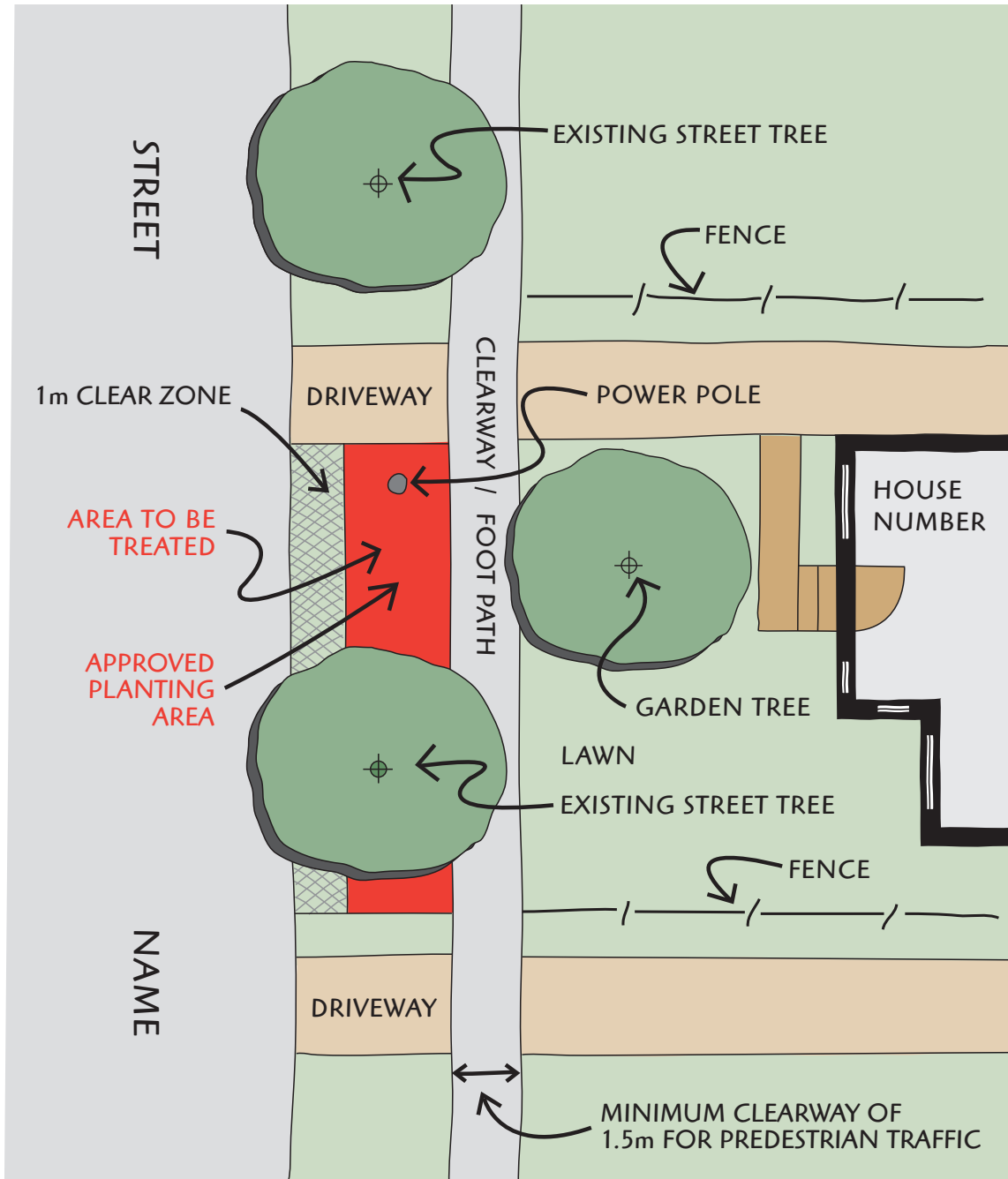
■ Non Compliance

Council will take appropriate action to rectify problems in relation to tripping hazards or safety issues. Council Officers will write to the relevant property owner requesting that they attend to the identified problem.

If the property owner fails to take action, a delegated Council Officer will issue a "Notice of Non-Compliance", requesting that the specific problem be fixed by a date (a 28 day notice is usually given).

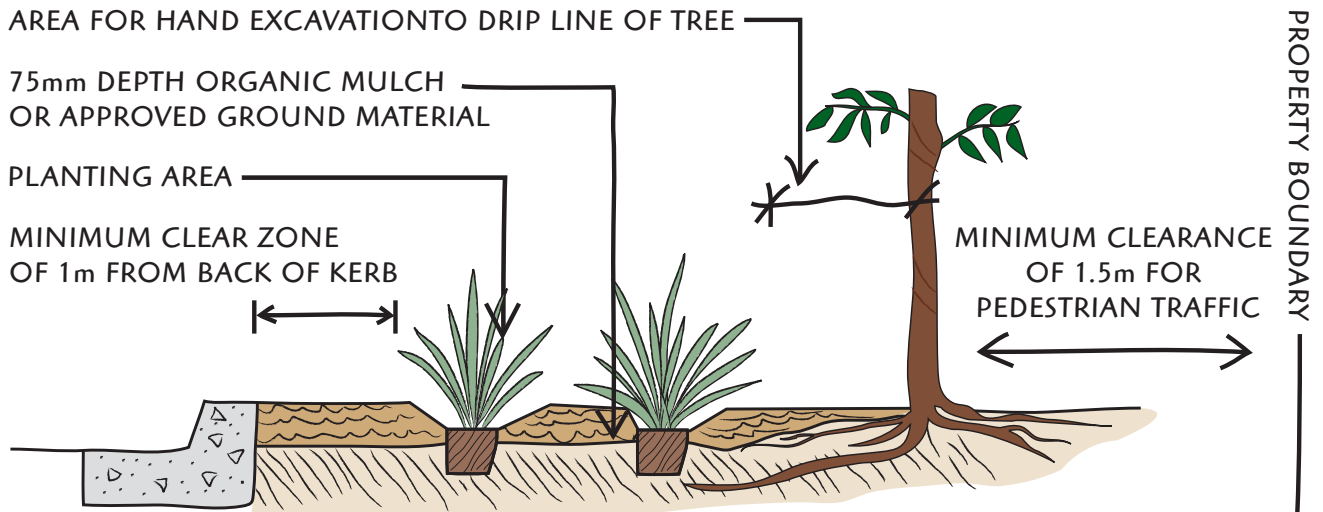
Failure to take action following a "Notice of Non-Compliance" can result in an "On the spot fine" (1 penalty unit) or "Infringement notice" (up to 10 penalty units). All fines would be issued under General Local Law 2005 Part 3 – Division 2 Clause 318. This applies to all non-compliant landscaping found within naturestrips. The value of the penalty units is reviewed on a regular basis and can be found on Councils website www.melton.vic.gov.au

Appendix 1 – Design Guidelines

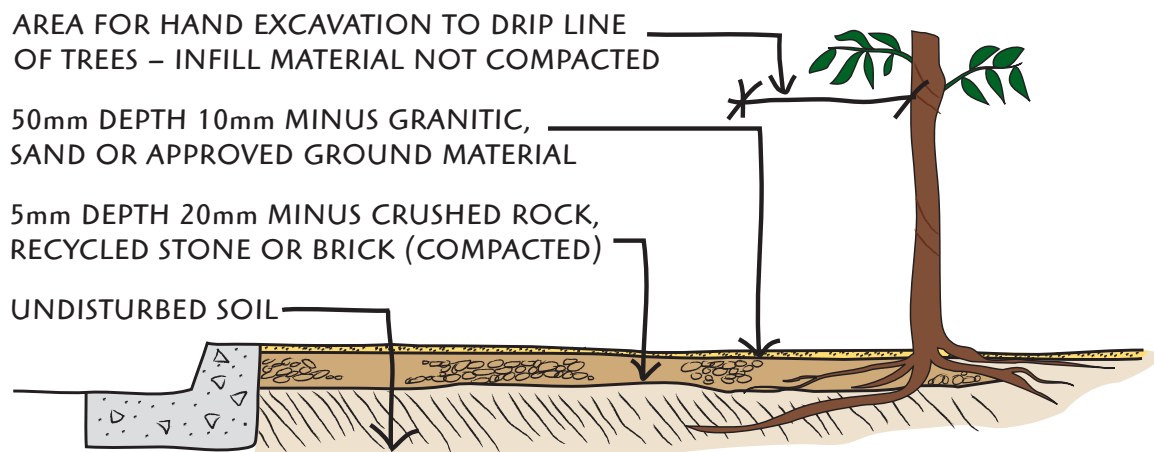


Proposed Naturestrip Development

Appendix 1 – Design Guidelines cont.



Installation details for alternative Option 2



Installation details for alternative Option 3

Appendix 2 – Planting Guidelines

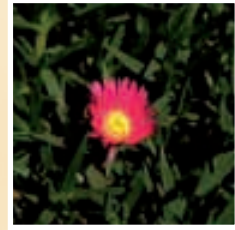
Approved plantings listed must be maintained below a height of 300mm. Alternative species will be considered by Council.



Grevillea
'Bronze Rambler'



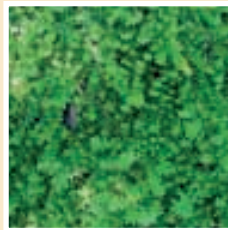
Grevillea
'Poorinda Royal Mantle'



Carpobrotus modestus
Inland Pigface



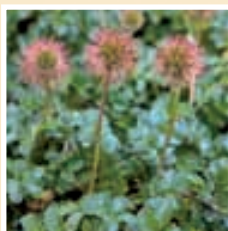
Kennedia prostrata
Running Postman



Myoporum parvifolium
Prostrate Myoporum



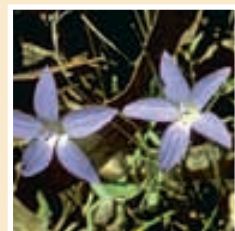
Mesembryanthemum
crystallinum 'Orange Glow'
Orange Pigface



Acaena novae-zealandiae
Bidgee Widgee



Brachyscome Multifida
Cut Leaf Daisy



Wahlenbergia stricta
Tall Bluebell

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