

We are currently drafting new nature strip guidelines and seek advice about planting under existing street trees. The advice will be used to inform the draft guidelines and how we may encourage or discourage nature strip planting to occur, the gardening advice we may provide to residents, and the inspection/maintenance regime we may apply to trees which have nature strip gardening within the TPZ.

Within Port Phillip residents garden on traditional grassed nature strips. In some areas where no traditional grassed nature strips exist, some residents garden in tree plots in pavement and in-road cutouts. In most instances when gardening in a tree plot, residents install a raised edge around the tree plot to contain additional soil to plant into. These raised edges are encouraged by informal community groups that have emerged for residents 'street gardening' in Port Phillip suburbs. The attached files show examples of the planting occurring in nature strips and tree plots and examples of narrow and wider nature strips in the Port Phillip area.

In recent community consultation, Council circulated draft nature strip gardening guidelines which disallowed planting within 1.5m of tree trunks (or 2.5m for larger trees), disallowed planting in tree plots and disallowed adding raised edges or changing the surface levels of soil around trees. There was significant community backlash against these proposed tree protection measures.

In light of this, we are seeking a quote to provide your independent advice for:

A brief report providing your qualifications and experience and your advice about:

1. What is the best practice growing conditions for street trees in nature strips and tree plots in relation to the tree pit and nature strip area around established trees. What is the evidence base and standards that establishes best practice.
2. What are the risks to tree health and safety if planting does occur in tree plots or in close proximity to the tree trunk
3. Outline potential damage caused to trees by modification of soil structure or grade within SRZ. Provide real-world examples and reference peer-reviewed journal articles where possible
4. Are there circumstances where planting beneath existing trees can occur without compromising the health and safety of the tree (for example, in grassy nature strips you recommend x, in tree pits you recommend y)
5. There are various sized tree plots around Port Phillip. Are there any circumstances where allowing planting in tree plots is ok? For example, in plots above a certain size?
6. What turf removal methods and planting practices do you recommend for planting in grassy nature strips that would cause the least damage to trees? The methods must be suitable for residents with no gardening experience.
7. The draft guidelines propose restricting plant heights on nature strips to ensure the safety of pedestrians around corners, driveways etc. Do you recommend any plant restrictions in areas around trees to preserve the longevity and stability of trees? (if any). If so, please provide any recommendations. For example, this could include setback distance that could be applied across all tree sizes/species/ages, certain plant forms/species that should not be planted – or anything else that is deemed important to consider.