

SCS-059 Residential Nature Strip Policy

TRIM Reference:

Due for Review:

Responsible Officer: Manager Assets & Engineering

Purpose

This policy outlines Surf Coast Shire Council's (Council) commitment to the management of nature strips within Council managed road reserves.

Policy Principles

This Policy has been prepared to provide clear direction to property owners and residents about what they are permitted to do with respect to landscaping on the nature strip directly abutting their property frontage. The following principles have been developed:

- Nature Strips are a public space that contribute to a sense of place and community.
- Nature Strips should be safe and accessible spaces.
- Nature Strips contribute to a healthy environment for people, plants and animals.
- Nature Strips play an active role in supporting Council's Climate Change Response.
- Nature Strip perform a role for location of essential services to the community (eg: watermains, gas, power, etc.)

Scope

This policy applies to all nature strips located on road reserves within township boundaries where Surf Coast Shire Council is the managing authority.

Policy

Council recognises that the issue of nature strip management impacts a variety of stakeholders including property owners and residents, as well as Council, commuters and service authorities.

Principle 1: Nature Strips are a public space that contribute to a sense of place and community.

- Council recognises that well-kept and functional nature strips can have a positive impact on the look and feel of streets. At their best they can exhibit people's pride in the place where they live and support harmonious relationships between neighbours and the wider community.
- Council encourages residents to take pride in their nature strips and therefore supports flexible use of these spaces in accordance with this policy and associated guidelines.

Principle 2: Nature Strips should be safe and accessible spaces.

- Nature strips must offer safety for pedestrians and prevent them from having to walk on the road. This may take the form of a constructed pathway or simply a smooth unobstructed path of travel.
- They should allow sufficient space for people to safely exit cars parked on the road.
- Plantings, trees and other structures within the nature strip should not be placed in a position that can cause site obstructions for people crossing the road, drivers exiting their driveways or at intersections.

Principle 3: Nature Strips contribute to a healthy environment for people, plants and animals.

- Council supports well-kept grass and modest plantings due to their environmental benefits and their ability to soften the streetscape.
- Council does not permit hard surfaces such as gravel, concrete and artificial turf as these do not absorb water, lead to higher runoff of stormwater and in the case of gravel and mulch type materials can be washed into downstream water bodies such as wetlands, rivers and the ocean.
- Council supports the planting of trees and other plants in the nature strip that provide safe places for birds and other animals.
- Vegetation within the nature strip should be in keeping with the local environment or neighbourhood character.
- Vegetation within the nature strip should not include noxious weeds or plant species that may be dangerous to people or animals.
- Council also supports the planting of some other forms of approved vegetation within nature strips in addition to grass to enhance the nature strips appeal.

Principle 4: Nature Strips play an active role in supporting Council's Climate Change Response.

- Nature Strips should support the actions of Council's Climate Action Plan through the "greening" of nature strips by planting grasses and other vegetation.
- Council discourages the use of materials within nature strip which prevent filtering of stormwater and may direct harmful sediments and nutrients into downstream waterways and wetlands.
- The planting of street trees and grass within nature strips reduces the Urban Heat effect. The temperature within urban areas during the hotter periods of the year is increased due to the amount of asphalt and concrete, and trees and grassed nature strips can contribute to reducing the overall heat effect. Gravel type nature strips actually increase the urban heat effect

Principle 5: Nature Strip perform a role for location of essential services to the community (eg: watermains, gas, power, etc.)

- Nature strips are the home for essential service infrastructure and easy access to this infrastructure needs to be maintained for the various service authorities. These services include, but are not limited to, power, telecommunications, water, sewer, stormwater and gas.
- Residents need to have space available in the nature strip to place their bins for collection on garbage collection days.
- Property Owners and residents understand the impact that maintenance undertaken by service authorities may have on their nature strips.

To support the principles Council adopts the following positions:

The townships within Surf Coast Shire are not all the same and implementing this Policy and its supporting guidelines may not be achievable within some townships, particular Lorne and Aireys Inlet, where the terrain is more challenging.

Nature Strip Guidelines

Council has developed "Residential Nature Strip Guidelines" which supports the delivery of this Policy. These guidelines are intended to act as basic information for property owners and residents by outlining what is an acceptable standard treatment for nature strip within the Surf Coast Shire. If a property owner or resident is adhering to these treatments when undertaking works within the Surf Coast Shire, they will not be required to take out a permit or seek permission from Council to undertake these works.

Undertaking works within the Nature Strips outside the Residential Nature Strip Guidelines

If a property owner wishes to undertake works on their nature strips that vary from the treatments outlined within these guidelines, a permit will need to be obtained so that officers can individually assess any proposed works against the guidelines and the broader principles of Council. If in doubt residents should make contact with Council Development Engineering team to discuss their proposals.

Street Trees

Planting and maintaining street trees is solely Council's responsibility. Property owners or residents are not permitted to remove, alter trees or plant new trees without Council's permission. Planting the wrong type of

tree can make the streetscape unsightly and unsafe. Unsuitable species can grow into powerlines, and their root systems can damage roads, drains, pathways and kerb and channel. Property owners or residents are not permitted to undertake any form of pruning of street trees, nor can they make any alterations such as boxing around the tree base or placing material around the base of the tree which can have a detrimental effect on the health of the tree.

Nature Strip Maintenance

Council does not carry out maintenance or renovation of nature strips. Property owners or residents of abutting properties are required to maintain the grass and any plants on the nature strip (excluding street trees). This includes regular mowing, weeding, edging and litter collection.

Council and Service Authorities Assets within Nature Strips

Council and service authorities that supply gas, water, electricity and telecommunications may from time to time require access to the nature strip to undertake maintenance work. These service authorities are required to reinstate the nature strip following maintenance work, but are not required to reinstate residential nature strips that have modified or landscaped in any treatment other than grass. When deciding on how you are landscaping your nature strip, consideration of the possible impact of works by service authorities should be taken into account.

Local Government Act 2020 Principles

Principles	Applicable to policy	If yes, provide details
Governance Principles (Consideration of the Governance Principles under s.9 of LGA 2020)	Yes	priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations
Community Engagement (Consideration of Community Engagement Principles under s.56 LGA 2020)	Yes	participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation
Public Transparency (Consideration of Public Transparency Principles under s.58 of LGA 2020)	Yes	participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation
Strategies and Plans (Consideration of Strategic Planning Principles under s.89 of LGA 2020)	No	
Financial Management (Consideration of Financial Management Principles under s.101 of LGA 2020)	Yes	financial risks must be monitored and managed prudently having regard to economic circumstances
Service Performance (Consideration of Service Performance Principles under s.106 of LGA 2020)	Yes	services should be provided in an equitable manner and be responsive to the diverse needs of the municipal community

Definitions

Nature Strip - A nature strip is the area of public land usually located between the property boundary and the back of kerb, edge of road or table drain, excluding any Council owned and managed assets such as a pathway.

Related Procedure

Not Applicable.

References

- Road Management Act 2004
- Local Government Act 2020
- Surf Coast Shire Residential Nature Strip Guidelines

- Surf Coast Shire Road Management Plan
- Surf Coast Shire Community Amenity Local Law 2021

Document History

Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
1	<i>Adopted</i>	<i>Council Resolution – TBC</i>