



Locality Sustainability Community

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Rewilding Stonnington

Indigenous Nature Strips: Guidelines



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We at Rewilding Stonnington acknowledge that we live and work on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung and Bunurong peoples of the East Kulin Nation. We acknowledge the living connection to country of Traditional Custodians and honour their care for country, its lands and waterways, plants and animals over tens of thousands of years. We respect and learn from their wisdom through the voices of Elders and leaders past, present and emerging. Sovereignty was never ceded.

1. Introduction: Planting Guidelines

Members of local environmental group Rewilding Stonnington Inc. have developed these Guidelines to support residents who are interested in planting out their nature strips with indigenous plant species. This brief introduction to nature strip planting with indigenous and endemic plants includes advice on soil preparation and plant selection. We actively encourage local residents to plant out their nature strips and are happy to provide additional advice on request.

For further information please feel free to contact us via rewildingstonnington@gmail.com

2. Benefits

A nature strip revegetated with indigenous and endemic plant species increases biodiversity, provides habitat for birds and insects, helps reduce the urban heat island effect and absorbs more run-off in heavy rains. It can be both environmentally and aesthetically pleasing, requiring less maintenance once established. Extending and improving urban green space has positive impacts on community wellbeing. Residents can build on their existing custodianship of nature strips and their growing awareness of the need to combat climate change, to improve this vital aspect of public space.

3. Nature Strips in Stonnington

The City of Stonnington has a chronic shortage of open space, with one of the lowest ratios of green open space per capita, of any municipality in Victoria. Nature strips/verges account for up to 30% of public open space. There are large areas of Stonnington where verges are in a sad state, bare or overgrown with weeds. Even when well maintained, a 'standard' grassed nature strip has very little biodiversity value and requires regular mowing, watering, weed control. This is a regrettable waste of scarce natural resources.

Please be aware however that residents wishing to plant out their nature strips will require a permit.

Stonnington Council takes climate positive environmental action seriously (City of Stonnington Council Plan 2025-28). Amongst other recent initiatives, Council approved a Nature Strip Planting Policy in 2023. Copies of the Policy, a Handbook and information about the online permit application process are available via <https://www.stonnington.vic.gov.au/Services/Trees-and-nature-strips/Applying-for-a-Nature-Strip-Planting-Permit>

Please note that the Council process requires applicants to provide documentation including a Before You Dig Australia report and evidence of local support. The Handbook provides guidance on heights and distances from kerbs and footpaths, the need to preserve access to gates and pathways, access for services, preservation of street trees and spaces for garbage collection.

Examples of indigenous nature strips can act as a showcase in your discussions with neighbours <https://rewildingstonnington.org/projects/nature-strips/>

We would also advocate for the publication of sample templates with simple design elements, to assist with a faster approval turnaround. Please contact us via rewildingstonnington@gmail.com for examples.

4. Risk minimisation

The risks involved in planting out your nature strip include: personal injury, interfering with underground services, damage to street trees and possible risks to pedestrians or dogs from inappropriate plant choices. It's smart as well as a Council requirement, to check with Before You Dig Australia (BYDA) before undertaking any practical works. The service is free but be aware first time users will need to sign up for an account <https://www.byda.com.au/>

A hedge barrier can be effective in reducing pollution levels to residential properties facing main roads, but could block access or become a trip hazard on a nature strip. Denser plantings may be permitted if located along the centre of the nature strip, under height restrictions and with consent of adjoining properties.

Please see section 7 below for our suggestions on soil prep, planting and safe tool use.

5. Plant Lists

Council provides successful applicants with a voucher for 12 plants. We would advocate for publication of a basic suggested plant list as a vital next step. We would also recommend a list of locally significant noxious and environmental weeds, given that many popular garden and even 'native' plants can become invasive. Ineffective soil preparation, inappropriate planting, and planting at unsuitable times of year, are also risks from both a plant survival and a safety point of view.

Please see Appendix 1 below for our list of suggested plants suitable for most local conditions; check out the Rewilding Stonnington website for updates <https://rewildingstonnington.org/links-and-resources/plant-suggestions/>

6. Implementation

We recommend residents wanting to revegetate their nature strip undertake a 5 stage process:

- 1.** Assess the site including orientation, sun directions throughout the day, soil type and health, pathways and access points. Check the Council Handbook, determine overall approach and suitability for approval. Check for risks including from passing traffic and any obstacles on site. Survey existing vegetation including trees; street trees on site will require special attention to avoid interfering with root systems. Talk to your neighbours! to ensure the project has their support and if possible, participation. If you are working in collaboration with Rewilding Stonnington, share information with us and discuss the level of support you require.
- 2.** Finalise design template and plant selection, from approved/recommended list. Do a Before You Dig Australia check for any service, right of way or other approval issues. Prepare documentation required for Council approval including site identification, simple design and proposed plant list. Check any other Council requirements. Submit application!
- 3.** Fix the date for your first working bee, according to the expected approvals timeline. Be flexible: local seasons and weather may influence the best time to begin (best seasons for planting with indigenous and endemic plants are autumn-winter into spring). The first task is to discourage exotic vegetation and

prepare the soil. You may need to mow, scalp and/or scarify the site, remove roots, even sift the soil to remove bulbs and tubers by hand. Take special care around tree roots. Please note we don't recommend the use of weed killer in domestic settings. Plastic sheeting is generally to be avoided; biodegradable weed matting is available but can be expensive. You could try other methods for deterring weed growth such as (preferably) organic section barriers, laying newspaper or cardboard, or pegging down cotton sheeting. Whatever approach you choose at this stage, finish with a good thick layer of mulch!

4. Over the next couple of weeks/months, check for new growth and remove weeds. Fix the date and issue invitations for your second and subsequent working bees – remember that more than one planting session may be required. Allow keystone plants like strappy plants, grasses and bushy plants to establish, before adding fussier/more fragile feature plants. Water in well. Don't forget to finish each session with a convivial get together, it's great to share that sense of achievement!

5. Ensure ongoing effective maintenance, according to site and seasonal requirements. Regular checks and hand weeding will be needed while plants establish; after that, once every couple of weeks (or months during winter), should be sufficient. In our experience, indigenous plantings need not as a general rule be irrigated; although watering by hand or hose may be advisable while plants establish or during extended periods of drought. When in doubt, add more mulch ...

Remember that plants will respond in different ways to seasonal and climatic conditions. As your nature strip continues to establish, you will observe how plants respond to the conditions of your particular site. You can adjust plant choice and position accordingly, but don't rush it. Give it time, bearing in mind the ultimate goal is as far as possible, to foster a self-sustaining strip requiring minimal intervention.

The main message is it can be done! The effort is worth it, the benefits are great – a small but meaningful contribution to the local environment, to the community and to your own and your neighbours' wellbeing and satisfaction.

7. Resources/further reading

Consultation with Traditional Custodians and Elders is a vital source of knowledge about our local country and its plants and animals. Stonnington sits in transitional country, between the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nations; different parts of the municipality will have stronger links to one group or the other, with landscape conditions and recommended plantings varying accordingly. Formal consultation with Traditional Custodians is not necessarily available or necessary for individual residential nature strip projects, but many of the resources below have been compiled with reference to or in association with, Traditional Custodians and other First Nations people.

Comparable guides

Many Melbourne municipalities have now adopted nature strip and street gardening policies; not all focus on indigenous plants but advice on indigenous plant species suitable for the area concerned is increasingly readily available.

The City of Stonnington issued the Nature Strip Planting Handbook in 2023 and before that in 2009 a booklet, Sustainable Gardening in Stonnington, in association with Sustainable Gardening Australia, which includes plant suggestions. https://www.sgaonline.org.au/pdfs/sg_stonnington.pdf

Amongst nearby Councils, City of Boroondara produced Nature Strip Guidelines in 2015.

<https://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/media/11761/download?inline>

City of Port Phillip's Nature Strip and Steet Gardening Guidelines were released in August 2022.

<https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/media/tggjf0eh/nature-strip-guidelines-2022.pdf>

There is also a Recommended Plant List.

<https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/media/ekgli05y/recommended-plant-species-list.pdf>

City of Glen Eira released its Nature Strip Planting Guidelines in 2023

https://www.gleneira.vic.gov.au/media/ilxg4xjb/nature-strip-planting-guidelines_2023_final.pdf

The Shire of Yarra Ranges has produced an extensive local plant directory. While not all listed species are suitable for growing conditions in Stonnington, it's an excellent general resource for the Melbourne area.

<https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/PlantDirectory/Home>

We encourage residents in Stonnington to benefit from the experience of other municipalities and encourage Council to develop plant lists appropriate for conditions in Stonnington. nb: this may still vary from one neighbourhood or microclimate to another. See the Resources section for other suggestions.

Indigenous Plant Nurseries

Nurseries are a great source of knowledge as well as plants! Specialist indigenous plant nurseries are often run co-operatively or by volunteers, so do check opening hours before visiting. Local(ish) nurseries include:

[Bili Nursery and Landcare](#) 525 Williamstown Rd, Port Melbourne VIC 3207

[Bungalook Nursery](#) 63-107 Fulton Road, Blackburn South, Vic 3130

[Greenlink Box Hill](#) 41 Wimmera St, Box Hill North VIC 3129

[VINC \(Victorian Indigenous Nurseries Co-op\)](#) Yarra Bend Road, Fairfield, VIC 3078

[Bayside Community Nursery](#) 315-317 Reserve Rd Cheltenham VIC 3192

[Kuranga Native Nursery](#) is a commercial outfit (nb: 'native' plants are not necessarily indigenous!) with an extensive range and helpful staff 118 York Rd Mt Evelyn, VIC 3796

For more recommendations including for Aboriginal run nurseries please see the list of indigenous plant nurseries on the [Rewilding Stonnington website](#)

EVC benchmarks

The most comprehensive information on floristic communities (indigenous plant species endemic to regional and local ecologies) in Victoria comes from mapping of Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) carried out by the then Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DWELP), now the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) since 1994. The Stonnington area is in the Gippsland Plain Bioregion. A full suite of information sheets is available on the DEECA website or via [Ecological Vegetation Class Benchmarks of the Gippsland Plain Bioregion \(PDF, 1.6 MB\)](#)

Amongst EVCs for the Gippsland Plain Bioregion, EVCs 55: Plains Grassy Woodland, 56: Floodplain Riparian Woodland, or 175: Grassy Woodland, apply to many areas in Stonnington although the species lists given are by no means exhaustive. As Graeme Lorimer points out, (Lorimer, Graeme S. 'Melbourne's plant life - past and present' *The Victorian Naturalist* 128 (5) 2011 pp. 175-182) native vegetation in the Melbourne region was already heavily diminished in extent and composition by the turn of the 20th century. The threat is ongoing, as must be efforts at revegetation.

Special note: Grasses

Grasses are often overlooked in favour of flowering plants, but as you can see from the above EVCs grasses are the heart of country! and the foundation of a healthy nature strip ...

Do check out tips by James Beattie, from his Garden Drum blog, a 2 part series on establishing native grasslands on nature strips in Melbourne (2017)

<https://gardendrum.com/2017/05/23/gardening-with-native-grasses-a-nature-strip-study/>

<https://gardendrum.com/2017/12/19/how-to-grow-an-australian-grassland-part-2-planting-maintenance/>

You could also check out Stephen Murphy's 'Recreating the Country' blog, via his informative website

<https://www.recreatingthecountry.com.au/>

Stonnington residents may find detail on other suitable plant species by consulting:

Books and other Resources

Flora of Melbourne by Marilyn Bull and George Stolfo (4th edn) Melbourne: Hyland House 2014

Native Trees and Shrubs of South Eastern Australia by Leon Costermans, Redd New Holland 2009

Australian Grasses: a gardener's guide to native grasses, sedges, rushes and grasstrees by Nick Romanowski Melbourne: Hyland House 2011

Check your local library, specialist bookshops or suppliers online for other titles. Please note the PMI Victorian History Library in St Edmonds Rd Prahran has an extensive collection of books and other resources about our local environment, including plants.

Useful links

Australian Plants Society Victoria <https://apsvic.org.au/>

BirdLife Australia <https://birdlife.org.au/>

Climate Action Network <https://www.cana.net.au/>

Environment Victoria <https://environmentvictoria.org.au/>

Gardens for Wildlife Victoria <https://gardensforwildlifevictoria.com/>

iNaturalist Australia <https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/>

International Environmental Weed Foundation <http://www.iewf.org/>

KooyongKoot Alliance <https://kka.org.au/>

Landcare Australia <https://landcareaustralia.org.au/>

National Tree Day – a project of Plant Ark <https://treeday.planetark.org/>

Port Phillip Eco Centre <https://www.ecocentre.com/>

Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria <http://www.rhsv.org.au/>

The Yarra Link Project <https://www.yarra.link/>

Tree Project <https://treeproject.org.au/>

Victorian Environment Friends Network (VEFN) <https://www.friendsvic.org/>

VicFlora online resource by Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria <https://vicflora.rbgb.vic.gov.au/>

For more useful links see the [Rewilding Stonnington website](#)

Shrubs / Small Trees		Medium Height		Low Growing / Prostrate			
<i>Acacia acinacea</i> 'Gold Dust Wattle'		<i>Bulbine bulbosa</i> Yellow Bulbine Lily		<i>Acrotriche serrulata</i> Honey-pots		<i>Goodenia ovata</i> Hop Goodenia	
<i>Cassinia aculeata</i> Common Cassina		<i>Correa alba</i> White Pea Bush		<i>Astroloma humifusum</i> Cranberry Heath		<i>Kennedia prostrata</i> Running Postman	
<i>Indigofera australis</i> Australian Indigo		<i>Correa reflexa</i> Common Correa		<i>Brachyscome multifida</i> Cut Leaf Daisy		<i>Myoporum parvifolium</i> Creeping Boobialla	
<i>Leptospermum continentale</i> Prickly Tea-tree		<i>Grevillea rosmarinifolia</i> Rosemary Grevillea		<i>Calocephalus citreus</i> Lemon Beauty-heads		<i>Pelargonium australe</i> Storksbill	
<i>Leptospermum obovatum</i> River Tea-tree		<i>Hibbertia riparia</i> Erect Guinea-flower		<i>Dichondra repens</i> Kidney-weed		<i>Pimelea humilis</i> Common Rice-flower	
<i>Olearia lirata</i> Snowy Daisy Bush		<i>Wahlenbergia communis</i> Australian Bluebell		<i>Drosera auriculata</i> Pale Sundew		<i>Viola hederacea</i> Australian Violet	

Strappy Plants & Grasses				Creepers & Climbers	
<i>Dianella revoluta</i> Flax Lily		<i>Poa labillardierei</i> Tussock Grass		<i>Billardiera mutabilis</i> Common Apple-berry	
<i>Deyeuxia quadriseta</i> Reed Bent-grass		<i>Poa sieberiana</i> Grey Tussock-grass		<i>Bossiaea prostrata</i> Creeping Bossiaea	
<i>Gahnia radula</i> Thatch Saw-sedge		<i>Rytidosperma racemosum</i> Wallaby Grass		<i>Comesperma volubile</i> Love Creeper	
<i>Lepidosperma laterale</i> Variable Sword-sedge		<i>Themeda triandra</i> Kangaroo Grass		<i>Gonocarpus tetragynus</i> Common Raspwort	
<i>Lomandra longifolia</i> Spiny-headed Mat-rush		<i>Austrostipa scabra</i> Slender Spear-grass		<i>Hardenbergia violacea</i> Purple Coral-pea	
<i>Lomandra filiformis</i> Wattle Mat-rush		<i>Dichelachne crinita</i> Long-hair Plume Grass		<i>Atriplex semibaccata</i> Berry Saltbush	
<i>Microlaena stipoides</i> var. <i>stipoides</i> Weeping Grass		<i>Carex appressa</i> Tall Sedge		Growing Wilder!	