

Sustainable Verge Makeover Guide



Benefits

A verge space converted into a waterwise, native garden:

- reduces water use, pollutants and run-off
- improves biodiversity and provides food and habitat for local wildlife
- helps beautify a streetscape and contributes to 'sense of place'
- helps reduce urban heat
- is low maintenance.



What is a verge?

The verge, or 'nature strip', is the area between the edge of the road and the private property boundary. You can check your verge area [using our Stirling Maps page](#).



Support

Each year the City provides support to residents to create waterwise, native verge gardens. Stay up to date on the support available, and other waterwise initiatives, on our [Water Management](#) webpage.



Responsibilities

Verge treatment maintenance is the responsibility of the householder of the property adjacent to the verge. The City is responsible for the planting and maintenance of street trees on verges.



Requirements

Read the City's [Verge Treatment Guidelines](#) before conducting your verge makeover to ensure any works meet the requirements of the City's Verge Treatment Policy and Thoroughfares and Public Places Local Law 2009.

- Installation of plants and organic mulch needs no prior approval from the City. If you are a tenant, ask the owner for permission first.
- Some materials are not allowed (e.g., gravel) and some treatments need prior approval – see the Guidelines above for more information.

Steps

Dial Before You Dig

Before you commence any landscaping or earthworks dial **1100** to locate underground infrastructure.



Grass/weed removal

Grass and weeds must be removed from your verge before you begin.

To avoid the use of harmful chemicals and earthmoving service costs, try one of the following removal methods instead:

- removing with a turf cutter or shovel
 - check local disposal options (some skips will not take grass)
- smothering
 - cover with newspaper/cardboard
 - add >5cm of compost on top to aid breakdown (newspaper/cardboard can draw water out of the soil) and to add nutrients to the soil underneath.
- solarizing ('cooking' the grass under a material)
 - will take several weeks
 - needs to occur during active growing period
- applying an organic herbicide (e.g., pelargonic acid based).

Top Tip

Remember to protect tree roots during grass removal and soil preparation! Only dig by hand near trees.

Soil preparation

Soil type

Firstly, do you know your soil type ? It will help you to understand what you are working with, and which local plants will thrive in your soil.

<u>Western Coastal</u> <u>Plain soil</u>	<u>Central Coastal</u> <u>Plain soil</u>	<u>Coastal soil</u>
Majority of suburbs in the City	Inglewood, and eastern parts of Dianella, Yokine, Coolbinia and Menora	Pockets of Scarborough, Trigg, North Beach, and Waterman's Bay

Soil water retention

Improving water retention in the soil is the next most important step to benefit your plants. All the above soil types can be hydrophobic (water repellent) and are highly permeable. These factors can prevent surface water from soaking in and allow water to drain down through the soil profile quickly (so water drains out before the plants can use it).

To improve this, at each planting hole:

- Mix bentonite/kaolin clay into the existing soil
- Add and mix organic matter through the soil (native-friendly compost)
- If necessary, an organic wetting agent can also be applied (used as a short-term remedy only as long term use harms the soil).

Look for products with the Waterwise or Smart Approved WaterMark symbol.



Soil level

You may have to adjust the level of your verge soil to ensure that once a 5-10cm mulch layer is added the overall ground level is sitting flush with the kerb. This is to avoid overspill onto the road/footpath and to retain water within the verge garden.

Planting

Timing

Birak First summer Dec - Jan	Bunuru Second Summer Feb - Mar	Djeran Autumn Apr – May *	Makuru Winter Jun – Jul *	Djilba First spring Aug – Sep	Kambarang Second spring Oct - Nov
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* In Wadjak country, it is best get your plants in the ground between Djeran (when the first rains come through) and Makaru, so they can establish deep root systems during the wettest seasons. This will help them to survive the intense heat of Birak and Bunuru.



Rules

The City's verge policy and guidelines require plants to be:

- under 75cm height to maintain driving sight lines
- not poisonous or thorny (for pedestrian safety)
- planted in the ground (no containers or raised beds)
- not planted within 2m of the kerb unless there is a footpath on your side of the street.



Species

The City recommends planting WA endemic (locally native) plants, which are:

- the most likely to survive
- beneficial to local wildlife and ecological corridors
- low maintenance
- waterwise and will not require an irrigation system if well mulched.

Consider using the soil guides to select the species which are adapted to thrive in your particular soil type.

If you want to help endangered or threatened local species check out those available from the Wildflower Society of WA nursery.

Further species lists are available in the City's Verge Treatment Guidelines or at the Water Corporation's Waterwise Plant Directory.



Plant care



For a pictorial guide on how to plant and care for your native plants (including watering, fertilizing and pruning) see our [Planting, Care and Maintenance Guide](#).

Street trees

- Street trees are pruned regularly by City contractors, see the [timing guide](#) for when pruning is due near you (note: damage can occur to plants)
- The City will plant a street tree on a participating verge where none currently exists

Top Tip

Remember to protect tree roots during grass removal and soil preparation! Only dig by hand near trees.

Layout



- To save water and fertiliser, group plants with similar water/fertiliser requirements together.
- Consider mature size of the plant (width and height), to ensure it will have enough growing/soil space and will not spill over onto the footpath or road.
- Leave 2m clearance next to the kerb if there is no footpath on your side of the street. Only place mulch in this space for pedestrian accessibility.
- A natural pathway can be incorporated into your verge garden to add interest and accessibility. However, this cannot substitute the 2m clearance next to the kerb which must be left if there is no footpath on your side of the street. Any path base needs to be a permissible verge treatment (e.g. soil or mulch).



Mulching

Mulch is essential in a waterwise garden. Applying a coarse mulch, 5-10cm thick, will retain moisture in the soil by preventing evaporation, provide a slow release of nutrients and organic matter for soil microbes and plants, cool the soil temperature, and will also suppress weeds.

- Use a coarse mulch to allow water infiltration and stop evaporation. Finer mulches breakdown quite quickly and often absorb the water meant for plants
- Apply 5-10cm deep
- Ensure you leave space around main plant stems and street tree trunks.

