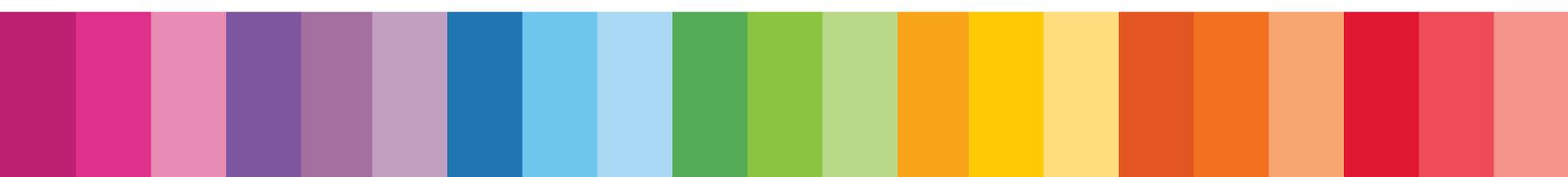




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VERGE & NATURE STRIP MAINTENANCE POLICY

JULY 2010

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1. INTRODUCTION

Most streets in the City of Ryde have areas between the constructed roadway and private property boundaries. These areas vary in nature from level grassed nature strips or grassed verges with constructed footpaths to steeply sloping embankments and retaining walls that are often very difficult to maintain. Regardless of their nature, these areas nonetheless contribute significantly to the streetscape of the City of Ryde and the amenity of our local neighbourhoods.

Council owns and controls these areas but does not have the physical or financial resources to maintain the vast majority of them. Consequently, Council relies upon and greatly appreciates the civic pride of residents in carrying out mowing or maintenance on its behalf whenever possible.

There are some cases where it would be unreasonable or impractical for residents with a medical condition to be expected to maintain these areas and this means that Council may carry out the mowing or maintenance.

Council therefore relies upon the majority of its residents to maintain those areas adjoining their property. Whilst there has been a long-standing procedure relating specifically to the mowing of grassed nature strips this document does not intend to significantly alter those existing procedures but to simply restate them and clarify the situation as to if or when, Council will provide maintenance assistance.

This document is designed also to provide guidelines on how those nature strip areas, some of which are not typical grass nature strips, will be maintained and further, to what assistance Council can give to residents who are unable to maintain such areas adjacent to their homes.

In addition to Council's long-standing procedures on maintenance of typical nature strips, it also receives periodic requests from residents wanting to replace the grass verge with low maintenance plantings. Council staff will continue to consider these requests on their merits. It is apparent, however, that Council needs to provide a clear set of guidelines in this matter in order to promote the maintenance and enhancement of these areas.

2. OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this policy are to provide information as to how we will manage nature strips that;

- Contribute to the overall visual amenity of the City of Ryde and enhance the aesthetic beauty of City of Ryde streets;
- Encourage community participation in creating and caring for grassed areas or gardens on the nature strip;
- Ensure that residents' maintenance practices on nature strips and verges contribute to the overall streetscape and amenity of the City of Ryde;

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- Define appropriate criteria to be used in assessing requests by residents to plant out nature strips or other verge areas;
- Establish the requirements of Council in relation to maintenance of areas that are not grass nature strips and to what level of assistance Council can offer to residents who elect to maintain these areas; and
- Ensure that the relevant section of Council maintains proper records of all works undertaken and to identify both the site and the person requesting assistance.

3. LAND TO WHICH THIS POLICY APPLIES

This Policy applies to all Council owned and / or controlled street verges and nature strips in the City of Ryde. For the purposes of this policy, a street verge or nature strip is defined as:

“Any Council owned and / or controlled land located between a constructed road and a parcel of private property but does not include land reserved for a public purpose such as a park or bushland area.”

4. POLICY

Council relies on the residents of the City of Ryde to maintain the nature strip or other verge outside their property unless it has determined to maintain the area in accordance with the guidelines within this policy document.

5. AREAS THAT COUNCIL MAY MAINTAIN

The City of Ryde may undertake to maintain nature strip or verge areas that meet any or all of the following general criteria:

- Areas of public significance.
- Where it would be impractical, unsafe or inappropriate for a resident to attempt maintenance with domestic resources.
- Areas that are assessed by Council staff as having value as remnant bushland and / or provide wildlife corridors within the City of Ryde.
- Grass nature strips fronting properties where the owner of the property is unable medically to undertake the work themselves and does not have either community groups or contractors providing a mowing maintenance service for their private property, and has made application to Council and further has had it approved for Council to maintain it.

Any approval will be based upon an annual period that will be reviewed. The minimum attendance time between mowing or maintenance will not be greater than every six (6) weeks in the summer months.

In taking a decision to maintain such an area, Council will have regard to its statutory responsibilities, budget, safety and public liability issues and the priority of the area compared to other sites requiring maintenance within the City of Ryde.

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6. AREAS TO BE MAINTAINED BY RESIDENTS

All areas not maintained by council are requested to be maintained by the owners and / or residents of the adjoining private property in accordance with the guidelines outlined below.

GRASS NATURE STRIPS / VERGES

Grass nature strips and verges need to be mowed regularly and Council appreciates the civic pride of residents who keep such verges neat and tidy so that they contribute to the general appearance of the street. It is recognised that some residents may appoint a contractor to undertake this work for them; however, Council will not contribute towards the cost of this work. As outlined in Section 5, under only certain circumstances will Council assist in the maintenance of a nature strip or verge area.

A resident may apply to replace the grass verge or nature strip outside their property with low maintenance plantings or garden beds. A written application must be made to Council. In general, Council will agree to the conversion of grass nature strip areas to garden beds where it does not adversely impact on access, parking or other situations.

The following issues (but not limited to) will be assessed in determining the application and must be specifically addressed in the application:

- Overall appearance and consistency of the streetscape.
- Alienation of public land i.e. whether public land is being made to look like private land and / or used for a private purpose.
- Any affect on access to kerbside parking.
- Any affect on access to adjacent properties.
- Any affect on access along the street for the general public.
- Public Liability issues.
- The public interest.
- Any other relevant matter.

A written response will be provided to the applicant. If Council agrees to the replacement of grass nature strips or verges outside private property with low maintenance plantings or garden beds, Council will not contribute financially to the cost of this work or its ongoing maintenance. This applies regardless of change of ownership / occupancy of the property.

AREAS OTHER THAN GRASS NATURE STRIPS / VERGES

Council recognises that there are areas in the City of Ryde that fall under this clause which may be difficult to maintain for a range of reasons. In these instances, Council accepts that residents may choose not to maintain any or all areas outside their properties other than the grass nature strip. Should residents choose not to maintain these areas and request Council to undertake maintenance the provisions of Clause 5 will apply.

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If residents choose to undertake maintenance of areas covered under this clause, Council will provide assistance depending on the circumstances of the case.

If the area is deemed to have bushland values, or provides a wildlife corridor or has habitat value as assessed by the relevant Council Officer, then assistance may be provided.

If the area is deemed not to have bushland values, or provide a wildlife corridor or have significant habitat value as assessed by the relevant Council Officer, then Council may still assist by providing some general guidance and assistance in formulating a work plan for the area.

7. DETERMINATION OF APPLICATION

The relevant Council Officer will assess any written application for Council to maintain the nature strip outside a property made under this policy, and will provide a written determination of the application within four weeks of receipt of the information. A medical certificate of physical or other inability to undertake the work MUST be provided with application.

If the applicant is not satisfied with the outcome of the application, an appeal may be lodged in writing and the matter will be reported to the Manager Assets and Infrastructure for determination.

8. ANNUAL SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Where Council agrees to maintain a nature strip, the resident will be required to submit a medical certificate each year to confirm the service is required for the following year.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

If you require any further information or clarification of this document, please contact Council's Customer Service on 9952-8222.

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