



# Greening your verge

## What is a verge?

The verge (or 'nature strip') is a segment of land situated at the front of your property between the footpath and roadside kerb.

Verges can vary in size from large to none at all. Their main purpose is to provide access to underground services including gas, telecommunications and electricity. They also provide safe and convenient access for pedestrians and kerbside waste collection.

Verges are typically filled with dolomite, and may contain a street tree which is maintained by council.

Greening your verge with plants can help to cool our city, improve the character and street appeal of your property, create more walkable neighbourhoods and provide habitat for native wildlife including birds, butterflies and other pollinators.

As the landscape of our neighbourhoods change, gardens are getting smaller and our community is looking for meaningful ways to engage with others and build community connectedness.

The City of West Torrens has developed this guide to help you through the process of how to green your verge.

## Benefits of landscaping your verge

As our suburbs change with more infill housing and more people and services to be accommodated, increased pressure is often placed on green open spaces. Coupled with a trend toward smaller backyards in many new dwellings, greening your verge is a great opportunity to make a positive change right at your doorstep.

Longer, hotter and more frequent heatwaves due to a changing climate will impact the health and well-being of our community. The loss of urban greenery and the types of materials used in houses can increase local temperature even further and create what is called the 'urban heat island' effect.

Greening your verge helps to reduce these impacts and cool our urban environment. A verge without plants accumulates heat and doesn't allow water to be absorbed into the ground. Alternatively, a verge with plant vegetation retains water. Plants and trees act like a natural air conditioner and

also contribute to improving local biodiversity. In addition the plants in your street enhance the amenity of your street, encourage greater community connection and create more walkable neighbourhoods.

## Who is responsible?

Verges are owned by Council and classified as part of public road under the Local Government Act 1999.

Council is responsible for:

- Ensuring the verge remains safe and doesn't pose any risks to public safety.
- Planting and maintaining street trees in verges across our city.

The City of West Torrens encourages residents to green their verge and take care of its ongoing maintenance while ensuring the area remains safe and accessible.



## How do I go about greening my verge?

### 1. Read

To ensure the project you have planned meets Council's requirements, read the [Urban Verge Management Policy](#) before you get started.

### 2. Plan

This guide has handy information and tips to design a verge garden that meets your needs. It is also worth visiting your local nursery and speaking to staff to learn more about suitable plants. Seek inspiration from other verge greening projects in your neighbourhood through the [Virtual Verge Trail](#).

Council can assist residents with redeveloping the verge through removing any existing dolomite and replacing with garden loam to provide a suitable environment for your new plants. There is no charge for this service but it is subject to demand and the availability of council budget.

### 3. Apply

Before commencing any works applicants need to complete a [Verge Application Form](#)

As part of your application you will need to consider the types of plants to be incorporated into the verge environment, and show how access for kerbside bin collection and pedestrian access will be maintained. In the application you will need to agree to taking on responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of the verge by signing an agreement with Council. This application process is governed by Section 221 of the Local Government Act.

### 4. Review

Council will assess your application, taking into consideration proposed changes and the safety of our community. Any alterations will need to meet relevant standards and legislation as outlined in Council's Urban Verge Management Policy. Once the application has been approved, Council will notify you and advise next steps for progressing any works.

### 5. Start greening

Once your application is approved, work on your verge can begin.

### 6. Enjoy and maintain

Once work has been completed, you are responsible for taking care of and maintaining the verge. Keep the area looking its best through regular watering and weeding, and ensure plants don't impact sight lines, grow higher than 500mm or spill onto the footpath. For safety reasons, it's also important to ensure that vegetation is kept clear of infrastructure such as stobie poles, footpaths, telecommunication pits, street trees, signage and driveways.

Just like in our gardens, activities on the verge can have an impact on the broader environment. To minimise impacts avoid the use of pesticides, fertilizers or herbicides especially where they may enter the stormwater system and marine environment through drains.

As part of a yearly program for weed control, Council will spray non-landscaped verges to eradicate and prevent

growth of weed species without prior notice to the property owner or resident. Verges that are included in the City of West Torrens' 'No Spray' register will not be sprayed. Contact Council if you wish to have the verge in front of your property placed on this register.

## Which plants are best?

Selecting appropriate plants for your verge is important to ensure they are able to withstand the conditions.

Things to avoid:

- Plants with thorns or spiky leaves.
- Toxic plants.
- Trees - council is responsible for planting trees in the verge.
- No weed species - planting pest plant species is illegal under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019. Refer to [Weed Control Handbook for Declared Plants in SA](#).
- Plants that reach a mature height greater than 500mm (50cm).
- Plants with fruit or berries.
- Artificial turf is not permitted because it decreases soil health and water infiltration, while increasing urban heat.
- Edible plants such as fruit trees, herbs and vegetables are deemed unsuitable due to the potential health impacts of contaminated soil which may be present in the verge.

Ideal plants:

- Local native plants (species that would have occurred in the area prior European settlement).
- Plants with high biodiversity value.
- Plants that can be easily maintained and pruned to maintain a low height.

The following resources are available to help select native plants:

- [Native Plants of West Torrens](#)
- [Adelaide Gardens - A Planting Guide](#)
- [Plant Selector Tool - Botanic Gardens of South Australia](#)
- [Native plant nurseries list](#)
- Native Plant Giveaway - Each year at this event Council provides pack of native plants to residents. Register for [GreenE-news](#) to receive further information when the event is held, or keep an eye out on social media.



Stiff flat-sedge  
*Cyperus vaginatus*

## Design Tips

When designing your new verge garden it is important to consider the site and how much time you have to spend on maintenance. Also consider if there is a design or look that you would like to achieve. Take a walk around the neighbourhood to see if there are verge gardens in your local area which provide inspiration? What styles would complement your house, front garden and overall streetscape?

Seek inspiration from places such as your local garden centre and sketch a rough design. Consider different colours, textures, scents and think about how many plants are required for the project, what size they'll reach at maturity and what maintenance they require. Keep in mind the orientation of your verge and how much sun or shade it will receive at different times throughout the year and select plants suitable for these conditions. Also consider hardier species for areas that receive high volumes of pedestrian traffic.

Perhaps you are looking to create a biodiversity haven for local birds or add some colour to the streetscape. Whatever you are seeking to achieve, a bit of planning upfront can help to guide the process.

Check out the [Virtual Verge Trail](#) to seek inspiration from other projects in your area.

## Paths and bins

The primary function of a verge is to provide access for a range underground services. Verges are also important in facilitating safe and easy access for pedestrians when crossing the road or exiting a parked vehicle. Visitors to your home will also need a clear and safe area to get in and out of a car.

The verge must not have any trip hazards or obstructions. There also needs to be enough space to place bins for the weekly kerbside waste collection. These considerations can be easily addressed in your design through the use of elements such as low grass, pavers, groundcovers or compacted rubble for access and bin placement. The surface for access and bins must be level and consistent with the surrounding environment.

Key points:

- Leave enough space for general pedestrian access and passengers to enter and exit from parked vehicles.
- Make sure plantings don't compromise the health of existing street trees.
- Keep safe and ensure any works don't encroach on stobie poles or utility access.

## Water

Verge gardens improve water quality by reducing stormwater runoff, and help to cool the urban environment through increased vegetation and water retention. Due to a changing climate, we are experiencing longer, hotter and more frequent heatwaves. Rainfall across western Adelaide will also continue to decrease, but have a higher intensity when it does rain making it important to capture as much water as we can.

Irrigation can be installed on a verge at your own expense, however incorporating a small depression (called a swale) into the design will help to capture rainwater and encourage more moisture to be retained following rain. Mulching will also help to retain moisture and minimise weeds.

