

NATURE STRIP PLANTING GUIDELINES

Your practical guide to creating a safe, wildlife-friendly nature strip garden in the City of Canada Bay.

2026

GROW OUR GREEN SPACES

City of Canada Bay

Acknowledgement of Country

The City of Canada Bay is a local government area in Sydney. We acknowledge the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in particular the Wangal people of the Eora nation, as the first inhabitants of the nation and the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we live, learn and work.





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Introduction

Greening our streets together

Create a greener street with a safe, low-maintenance, wildlife-friendly nature strip garden.

Nature strip gardens are a simple and powerful way to:

- Cool your street and reduce urban heat.
- Support bees, birds, and biodiversity.
- Improve soil and stormwater absorption.
- Enhance your neighbourhood.

Like backyard gardens, verge planting helps create a network of **wildlife habitat "stepping stones" across the city**.

What is a nature strip garden?

The nature strip is the grassed road reserve between your property boundary and the kerb.

Although it is Council-owned land, residents may plant a low, safe, low-maintenance garden with Council approval.

Public land – shared responsibility

Nature strips are **Council land**. They must work for everyone in the community. Gardening must follow specific requirements to ensure safety and accessibility.

Council may remove or modify nature strip gardens for unauthorised infrastructure or maintenance works. Council will remediate the nature strip to Council standards. Residents are responsible for costs of reinstating the planting in an approved garden following Council works.

This guide summarises requirements from Council's **Nature Strip Planting Policy** in clear, practical language. It explains how to:

- check if your nature strip is eligible
- design a safe, compliant garden
- apply for approval
- plant safely and responsibly
- maintain your garden over time.







Quick Start: Nature strip gardening in 6 steps

1 **Check your site is eligible**
Not all nature strips are suitable.

2 **Design your nature strip garden**
Choose safe plants/materials, keep access for everyone, no hard edges/structures, check services (Before You Dig).

3 **Apply to Council**
Do not start gardening until approval is issued.

4 **Install your garden safely**
Hand tools only near street trees; dig shallow (≤ 40cm).

5 **Send a photo to Council**
Photograph the finished garden and email/submit as confirmation.

6 **Care for and maintain your garden**
Keep plants low, remove weeds, and keep mulch contained.

Nature strips are Council land – make sure they work for everyone.





Step 1:

Check your site is eligible

Read the Nature Strip Planting Policy and this Guide, available on Council's website.

Not all nature strips are suitable.

Is your nature strip eligible? (quick checklist)

Use this quick checklist to see if your site is likely to be approved.

You can apply if your site meets all the criteria below.

Site eligibility

- ☐ The property has a **residential rated frontage** (no commercial sites).
- ☐ The proposed nature strip garden is on Council land adjacent to your own residential property.

Permission

- ☐ You are the **property owner**, or
- ☐ You are a **tenant with written consent from the owner** *(Approval and responsibility for the nature strip stays with the property owner).*

Responsibilities

- ☐ You agree to **install and maintain** the garden.
- ☐ You will carry out **ongoing weed monitoring and removal**.
- ☐ If you move or can no longer maintain it, you will **reinstate standard turf**.

Services & safety

- ☐ You will obtain Before You Dig Australia (BYDA) plans and follow all requirements before digging.

Design compliance

- ☐ Your garden will comply with all **design rules in the Nature Strip Planting Policy and this Guide** (safety, access, materials, and plant selection). More details later in this Guide.

Plant selection

- ☐ Proposed plants are **low-growing and non-hazardous**.
- ☐ No **declared or priority weeds** will be used.
- ☐ No **food-producing plants** will be included.

Special areas / extra approvals

- ☐ You've checked if the site is on:
  - **Biodiversity significant land or remnant vegetation:** These areas require native plants only – check Council's Development Control Plan mapping and list of acceptable species.
  - **A classified (main/busy) road:** May require **Section 138 Roads Act approval** from the relevant authority *(Council or Transport for NSW – confirm with Council).*



Step 2:

Design your nature strip garden

Ask for help

Council's Sustainability Team can advise on your proposed design and species before you submit.

Understand your site

Before designing your nature strip garden, consider:

Sun and shade
Observe how sunlight moves across the nature strip during the day.

Soil type
Canada Bay's soils vary from sandy near waterfront areas to clay inland. Choose suitable plants to match the soil type.

Water movement
Avoid blocking drainage or directing runoff to roads or paths.

Trees, driveways and access points
Design around existing trees and pedestrian routes.

Plant suitability
Choose hardy, low growing native plants that need minimal watering and tolerate local soil conditions.

Be a good neighbour

Chat with neighbours before you apply and keep communication open as you maintain your garden.

Council typically becomes involved only when gardens become unsafe or non compliant.

Please refer to section Design Rules, page 12, for more detailed information.







Step 3:

Apply to Council

1. Complete the **Online Nature Strip Planting Setup Application Form and checklist, available on Council's website.**

2. Prepare and attach a simple plan showing:
   - 600mm kerb setback
   - 1m pedestrian path
   - 2m tree protection zone
   - no planting distances (corners, bus stops)
   - plant species list and materials you will use.

3. Attach the **BYDA referral notice and all utility responses** to your application checklist so Council can confirm your proposed planting area does not conflict with underground services.

4. Submit your application to Council and wait for approval before starting any work.

Council Details

Address: City of Canada Bay Civic Centre
1A Marlborough Street, Drummoyne,
NSW 2047 Locked Bag 1470
Drummoyne NSW 1470

Website: www.canadabay.nsw.gov.au

Email: council@canadabay.nsw.gov.au

Phone: 9911 6555







Step 4:

Install your garden safely

Install your garden safely

Do not start any construction or planting of your nature strip garden before you have obtained approval from Council.

1. Safety first

- Before starting work, use your BYDA plans to identify and mark underground services on site.
- Do not plant over underground services, and make sure access to them is maintained at all times.
- Use hand tools only and keep digging shallow – no more than 40cm deep.
- If you are unsure about the location of a service or how to interpret the plans, contact the relevant utility provider before continuing.

2. Construction – avoid utility services and tree roots

- No pruning or removal of street trees.
- Do not plant or dig within 2m of the trunk of any street tree.
- Take care not to damage tree roots which may extend beyond 2m of the tree trunk.
- Prepare soil with light cultivation only.

3. Prepare the site

- Remove weeds by hand and remove turf carefully.
- When removing turf, keep levels flush with the footpath and kerb and avoid edges that create trip hazards.
- Remember you are working next to the road – be aware of traffic and pedestrians.
- Plant your seedlings and plants.
- Water thoroughly.
- Apply mulch and contain mulch and soil so nothing spills onto the footpath, road or drain.



Step 5:

Send a photo to Council

Send a photo of your completed garden to Council as confirmation.



Step 6:

Care for and maintain your garden

A nature strip garden is your responsibility to maintain and keep compliant with Council rules.

Ongoing tasks

- Water, especially during establishment.
- Weed regularly.
- Prune to maintain within height and access rules.
- Replace dead plants.
- Sweep soil or mulch from the footpath and road.
- Check for and fix trip hazards.
- The approval stays with the property. When the property is sold, the garden must be fully compliant.

Complaints, unapproved gardens & not meeting the rules

- Before applying, consult affected neighbours about your proposed garden.
- Council may investigate unapproved, unsafe, or non-compliant gardens and direct modification or require reinstatement of turf or take enforcement under the Roads Act 1993 and Local Government Act 1993.
- If Council gives a direction, you must comply within the timeframe specified by Council. If not, Council may carry out the work and recover its reasonable costs from the property owner.



Design Rules

You must follow these design rules to protect access, safety, street trees, utilities and visibility.

1. Site eligibility

The proposed nature strip garden must be on Council land adjacent to your own residential rated property and meet all the other requirements in Step 1.

2. Safety first

- Request utility plans from Before You Dig Australia (BYDA) plans before starting to check for underground services such as water, gas, electricity, telecommunications and NBN.
- BYDA will provide a referral notice and responses from relevant utility providers for your property area.
- If you are unsure how to read the plans, contact the utility provider listed on the response.
- Use hand tools only and dig no deeper than 40cm. No mechanised tools or equipment are permitted. Underground services can still be located within this depth, so it is essential to check BYDA plans before any work begins.
- Do not plant over underground services. Access to services must be maintained at all times.

3. Location & Access

Plantings must allow pedestrian access across a nature strip (minimum 1m wide clearing). There needs to be enough room to place mobile garbage, recycling and green waste bins. Some areas may not be suitable for nature strip plantings due to the narrowness of the footpath.

Plantings must maintain safe access and visibility:

- keep a 600mm setback from the kerb
- maintain a 1m clear pedestrian path
- allow space for bins on collection days
- do not plant or dig within 2m of a street tree trunk.

No planting:

- within 2m of the centre of any street tree trunk (this is a no dig / no plant zone)
- within 10m of corners
- within 20m of a roundabout
- within 15m before and 10m after a bus stop
- beside accessible parking or cycleways
- where access to driveways, paths or bins is blocked.

4. Heights & Sightlines

- Plants must be maintained below 1m at maturity to preserve visibility for vehicles and pedestrians.
- No spiky, prickly, hazardous or poisonous plants.

5. Materials – Allowed

- Granitic sand.
- Crushed sandstone <10mm aggregate.
- Structured soils that are compliant with AS 4419:2018.
- Soils for landscape and garden use.
- Soft fall mulch, or fine organic mulch.
- All materials must be stable, level, contained and level with kerb and footpath.

Figure 1. Fine organic mulch



6. Materials – Not allowed

- Rocks, edging, retaining walls or hard structures.
- Raised borders or planter boxes (except where separately approved).
- Synthetic turf.
- Irrigation systems.
- Stones >10mm.
- Coarse woodchips.
- Declared or priority weeds.

7. Choose the right plants

Choose low-growing, native, non-hazardous plants with seasonal flowering diversity. More planting ideas are in Council's Nature Strip Plant List, later in this Guide.

Example of suitable plants: Pigface (Carpobrotus), Forest Goodenia (Goodenia hederacea), Pale Fanflower (Scaevola), Blue Flax Lily (Dianella), Lomandra 'Tanika', and Native Violet (Viola hederacea) for shade.

- Planting style – dense, low planting.
- **No spiky, prickly or poisonous plants**.
- **No declared or local priority weeds**; keep up ongoing weed removal.
- **No food plants** on the nature strip.

Common name: Pigface
Botanical name: Carpobrotus glaucescens



Common name: Forest Goodenia
Botanical name: Goodenia hederacea



Common name: Fairy Fan-flower
Botanical name: Scaevola aemula 'Purple Fanfare'



Common name: Blue flax lily
Botanical name: Dianella caerulea



Common name: Mat Rush
Botanical name: Lomandra longifolia 'Tanika'



Common name: Native violet
Botanical name: Viola hederacea



Planter boxes (limited circumstances only)

Planter boxes are not part of standard nature strip gardens and are only approved in limited circumstances.

They may be considered only where there is a specific need, such as an accessibility or mobility issue. Council approval is required before any planter box is installed.

- Planter boxes are **not permitted** in Heritage Conservation Areas.
- Applications must include the proposed planter box location, dimensions, materials and specifications.
- Planter boxes must be installed only in accordance with Council's approval.
- Planter boxes must be stable, placed on firm level natural ground, and designed to drain freely.
- They must not create barriers or hazards for pedestrians, road users, neighbouring properties, street trees, utilities or other services.
- A minimum **300mm clearance** must be maintained from the edge of the footpath, and planter boxes are not suitable on nature strips narrower than **2m** (excluding the footpath).
- Maintain a minimum **1m clearance** from any driveway edge.
- The maximum height of the planter box and fully grown plants combined is **1m**.
- Planter boxes must not damage the footpath, kerb, road, adjoining land or other Council assets.
- The base must include a weed mat or geofabric layer to separate existing site soil from imported growing medium.
- All edges, tops and fixings must be safe and free of sharp projections, nails, rust or overhanging materials.
- Irrigation systems, ornaments and other structures are not permitted in or around planter boxes.
- Once installed, residents must submit photos to Council and continue to maintain the planter box in a safe, tidy and compliant condition.
- Only planter boxes approved by Council may be used – see right.

Figure 2. Approved colourbond planter box



Colourbond Steel Planter

Material and Colour	Corrugated Steel in neutral colour
Steel Edge	Rolled steel safety edge with rubber rim
Fixings	Galvanised fixings and screws
Dimensions	Maximum height (including fully-grown plants) 1m

Figure 3. Approved treated pine planter box



Treated Pine Planter (ACQ or LOPS only*)

Board size	90-180mm maximum height x 30-40mm thick
Corner post	50 x 50mm stake x 400mm high
Fixings	Galvanised fixings, minimum M8 diameter
Dimensions	Maximum height (including fully-grown plants) 1m

*ACQ indicates the use of Copper and Quaternary Ammonium compound to protect against fungi, termites and other wood-boring insects.

*LOPS indicated light organic solvent preservative, and is a waterproof timber treatment, using wax or resin to help make the timber water resistant.

*CCA is not permitted, indicates copper chrome arsenic and should not be used for planter boxes.

Why approvals and distances matter

Nature strips are part of the public road reserve. Many works within road reserves in NSW require consent under Section 138 of the Roads Act 1993. Council is usually the roads authority; Transport for NSW may be involved for classified main roads. Rules ensure pedestrian access, driver visibility, and safe protection of services such as electricity, water and communications.

Always request a free BYDA plan before starting any gardening work.

If you are renting the property and wish to plant a nature strip garden you will need written permission from the owners of the property. The owners will need to take responsibility for the maintenance, upkeep or removal of the garden if the renter moves out. The council is not responsible for any of these costs.

Public liability

This policy has been developed to manage public liability risks. It does not prevent a third party from making a claim against the resident for any injury, loss or damage caused by the nature strip garden or planter boxes.



Sample layouts

Diagrams

- A simple native ribbon (typical 2.2m deep verge).
- 600mm kerb setback (no planting).
- 1m pedestrian path (mulch compacted and kept flush).
- Two 600–700mm wide bands of low natives.

Figure 4. Tree placement to intersection

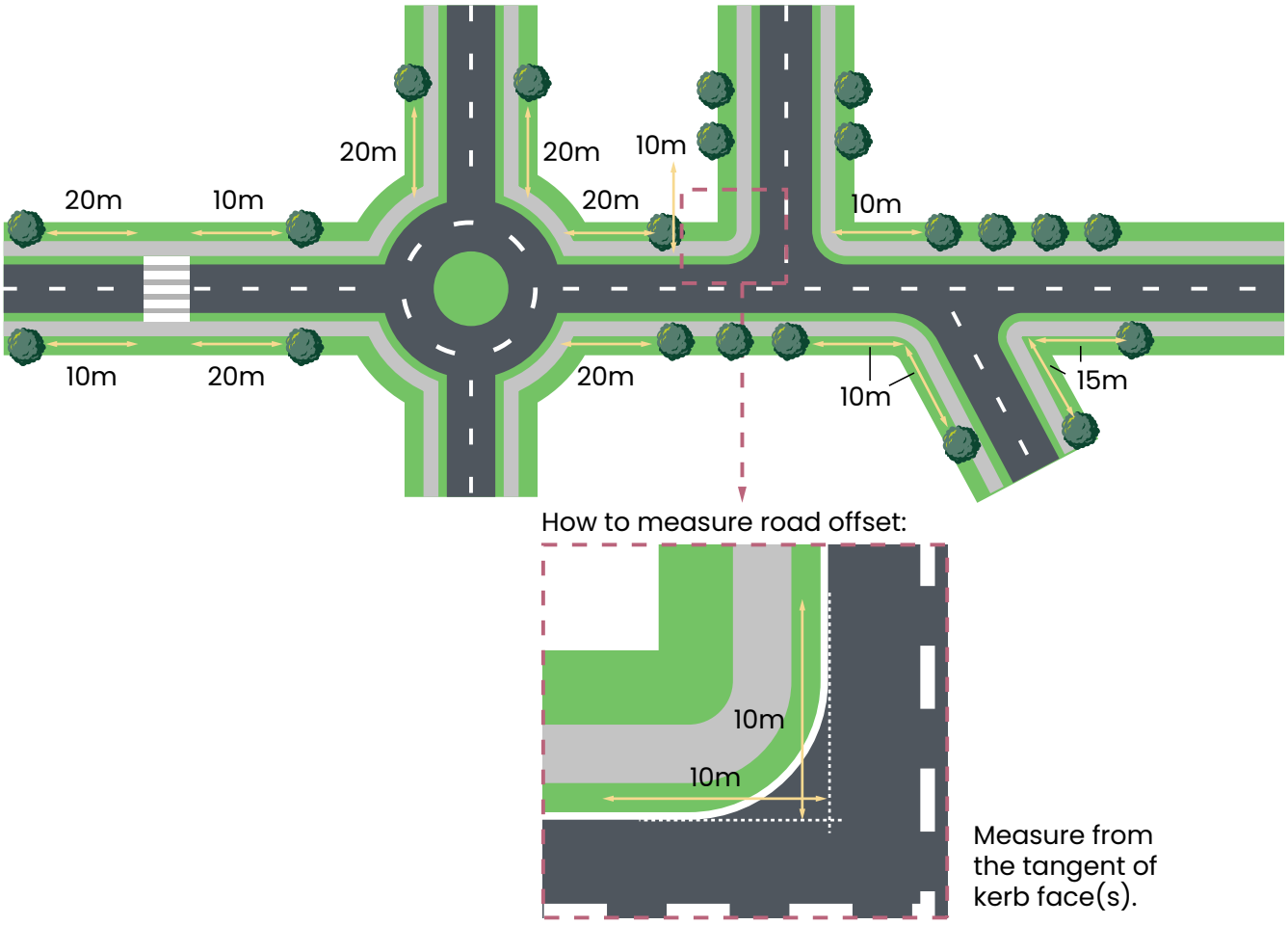
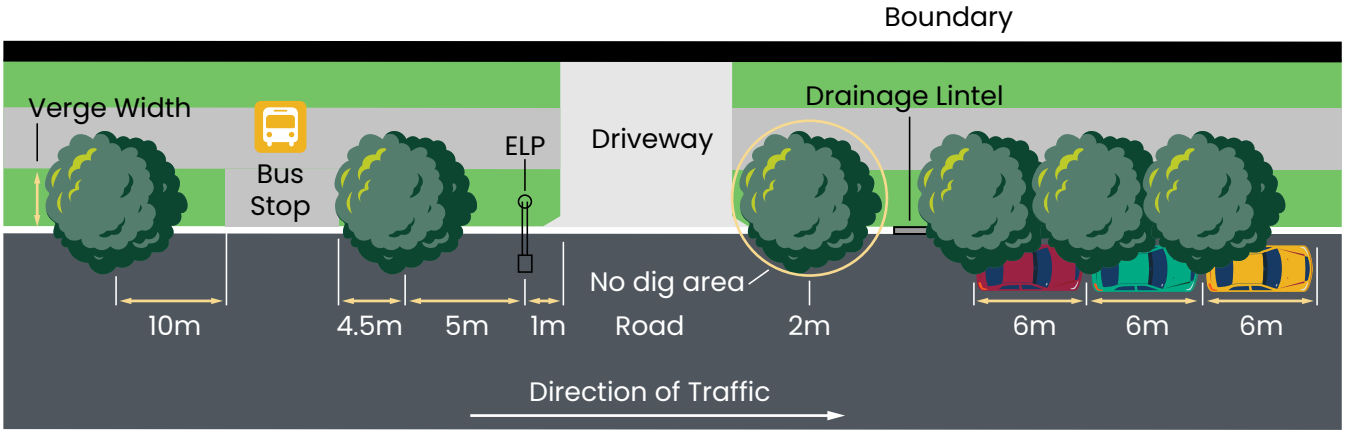
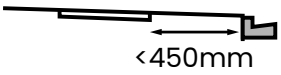




Figure 5. New tree infrastructure offset

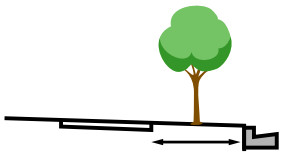


Tree type guide on verge width



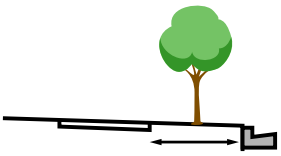
Verge to be Concreted or Shrubs

Example Shrub:
Gardenia



Max Trunk Diameter 150mm

Example Tree:
Bottle Brush, Lilly Pilly



Max Diameter width of verge less 300mm

Example Tree:
Gum Tree

General Note:

1. New tree to be planted centrally in grass verge where possible.
2. Tree to be placed between car spots approx. every 6m.
3. Tree should not be placed in a location that would impede future asset Formwork.

Tree buffer & bus stop distances

- Tree buffer shows a 2m radius no dig circle around a street tree.
- Bus stop distances show a street segment 20m from a corner, 15m approach to and a 5m departure from a bus stop.



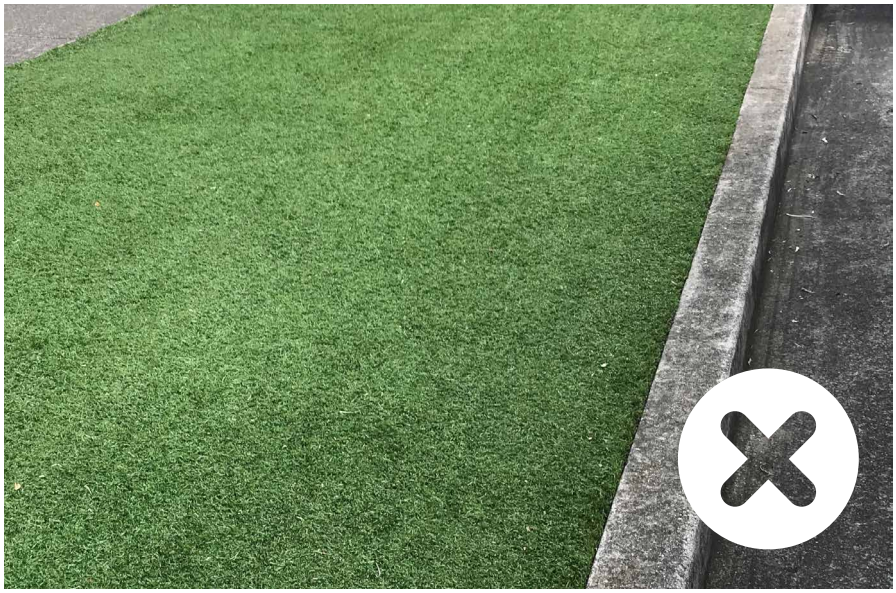
Examples of non-compliant nature strip gardens

The gardens shown are non-compliant. These gardens have the following compliance issues:

- Includes hard landscaping elements, including raised edges which may create a trip hazard.
- Plants are overgrown, spilling onto the footpath or road, and blocking lines of sight for pedestrians and vehicles using the road.
- Artificial or synthetic grass is not permitted. It inhibits rainwater soaking into ground, adds to stormwater run-off and is also very hot in warm weather, contributing to heating effects in summer months. Plus, it can be a trip hazard.









Frequently asked questions

Do I need approval for every small planting?

Yes. All nature strip gardens require Council approval before any planting begins.

Can I prune or remove a street tree?

No. Street trees are managed by Council and must not be pruned, removed or damaged.

Can I install drip irrigation?

No. Irrigation systems are not permitted. Hand watering only.

What about planter boxes?

Planter boxes are only considered in limited circumstances and are not part of standard nature strip gardens.

Council may consider a planter box where there is a demonstrated accessibility or mobility need and a standard in-ground garden is not feasible.

Any planter box must be approved by Council and designed to be safe, low, and not obstruct access, visibility, street trees or underground services.

Planter boxes will not be approved for aesthetic preference or where a standard garden is suitable.

What if the verge is on a busy or State road?

Contact Council to find out if additional approval is required under the Roads Act 1993 and whether Transport for NSW consent is needed.



Need help?

For advice or applications

City of Canada Bay

Phone: 9911 6555

Email: council@canadabay.nsw.gov.au

Live chat: 8:30am–4:30pm, weekdays

Council staff are here to help you

- Contact **Council's Sustainability Team** for advice before applying. They can help you make sure your proposed garden is safe, sustainable and likely to be supported by Council.
- Contact Council's Duty Planner. We offer a free 15-minute Duty Planner phone call service between 9am–12pm weekdays.

Helpful Council resources

- Apply online: Nature Strip Planting Setup Checklist / Application.
- Nature Strip Policy & Guidelines webpage (Policy, Guidelines, Application Form).
- City of Canada Bay Council's Public Mapping Service.
- City of Canda Bay Development Control Plan.
- City of Canada Bay Priority Weeds Management Plan.

Other resources

- Before You Dig Australia (BYDA) – request utility plans.
- Section 138 approvals (NSW Planning Portal) – background.
- Transport for NSW Road Classification Map.
- Transport for NSW – Works in the road reserve.



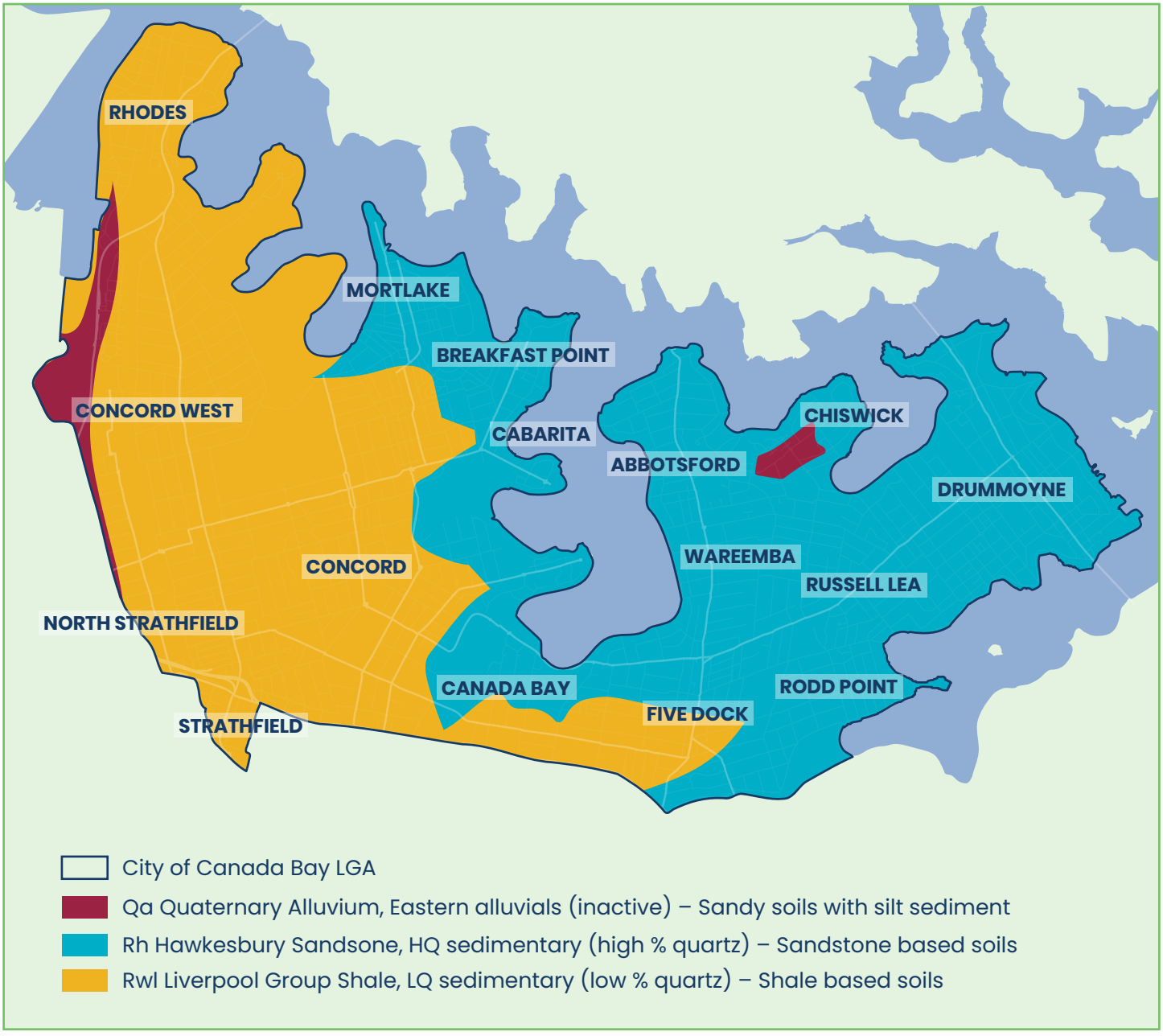


Native plant list for nature strips in City of Canada Bay

Conditions in every nature strip are different. Make sure you choose plants that are suitable for your soil type and location from this list of plants that are recommended for the local area.

Soils Map of Canada Bay

Choose plants that suit the soils and local biodiversity.



Recommended Native Plants for Nature Strips in City of Canada Bay

Key

- Indigenous (local)
- Native (non-local)
- Hybrid
- May need pruning
- Full sun
- Part shade
- Shade
- Low water
- Moist soils

"Best for" column key

- Pollinators (bees, butterflies)
- Habitat (birds, shelter/food)
- Verge toughness (heat, compaction, exposure)
- Low maintenance
- Groundcover weed suppression
- Moist areas
- Heat/drought tolerant
- Coastal

Botanical name	Common name	Category	Height	Position	Water	Preferred soils	Flower colour	Best for	Origin	Notes
Actinotus helianthi	Flannel Flower	Low shrub	0.5m			Sandy	White			
Anigozanthos spp.	Kangaroo Paw	Low shrub	0.7m			Sandy	Red/yellow/ orange			
Astroloma humifusum	Native Cranberry	Low shrub	0.3m			Most soils	Red			
Chrysocephalum apiculatum	Yellow Buttons	Low shrub	0.3m			Clay	Yellow			
Dianella caerulea	Blue Flax Lily	Low shrub	0.5m			Most soils	Blue/ purple			
Dianella 'Little Jess'	Native Flax	Low shrub	0.3m			Most soils	Blue			
Dianella longifolia	Dianella	Low shrub	0.5m			Most soils	Pale blue			
Dianella revoluta	Mauve Flax Lily	Low shrub	0.5m			Most soils	Mauve			
Grevillea lanigera 'Mt Tamboritha'	Prostrate Grevillea	Low shrub	0.5m			Free draining	Red			

Botanical name	Common name	Category	Height	Position	Water	Preferred soils	Flower colour	Best for	Origin	Notes
Plectranthus argentatus	Silver Plectranthus	Low shrub	0.1–0.7m			Free draining	Pale purple			
Pomax umbellata	Pomax	Low shrub	0.3–0.5m			Most soils	Cream			
Pultenaea villosa	Hairy Bush-pea	Low shrub	0.7m			Clay	Yellow			
Rhodanthe anthemoides	Chamomile Sunray	Low shrub	0.4m			Most soils	White/yellow			
Westringia fruticosa ‘Mundi’	Coastal Rosemary	Low shrub	0.5m			Sandy	White			
Aristida vagans	Spear Grass	Grass	0.7m			Most soils	–			
Dichelachne micrantha	Plume Grass	Grass	0.5–1m			Most soils	–			
Ficinia nodosa	Club Rush	Grass	0.5m			Sandy/loam	–			
Lomandra filiformis	Mat Rush	Grass	0.4m			Most soils	Cream			
Lomandra ‘Tanika’	Tanika	Grass	0.5m			Most soils	Cream			
Microlaena stipoides	Meadow Grass	Grass	0.3m			Most soils	–			
Oplismenus aemulus	Basket Grass	Grass	0.3m			Most soils	–			
Oplismenus imbecilis	Beard Grass	Grass	0.3m			Most soils	–			
Poa affinis	Tussock Grass	Grass	0.5–0.8m			Most soils	–			

Botanical name	Common name	Category	Height	Position	Water	Preferred soils	Flower colour	Best for	Origin	Notes
Rytidosperma tenuius	Wallaby Grass	Grass	0.7m			Most soils	–			
Themeda australis	Kangaroo Grass	Grass	0.7m			Most soils	–			
Hardenbergia violacea	Native Sarsaparilla	Vine	0.2m			Most soils	Purple			
Hibbertia scandens	Snake Vine	Vine	0.2m			Most soils	Yellow			
Kennedia rubicunda	Coral Pea	Vine	0.3m			Most soils	Red			
Calotis lappulacea	Yellow Burr Daisy	Groundcover	0.5m			Sandy	Yellow			
Carpobrotus glaucescens	Pigface	Groundcover	0.3m			Sandy	Pink			
Einadia nutans	Saltbush	Groundcover	0.2m			Clay	–			
Geranium solanderi	Native Geranium	Groundcover	0.5m			Sandy	Pink			
Goodenia hederacea	Forest Goodenia	Groundcover	0.7m			Most soils	Yellow			
Goodenia ovata 'Prostrate'	Goodenia	Groundcover	0.4m			Sandy	Yellow			
Lobelia dentata	Lobelia	Groundcover	0.4m			Sandy	Blue/purple			
Mentha satureioides	Native Pennyroyal	Groundcover	0.4m			Most soils	White/pale mauve			
Pratia purpurascens	White Root	Groundcover	0.4m			Most soils	White			

Botanical name	Common name	Category	Height	Position	Water	Preferred soils	Flower colour	Best for	Origin	Notes
Scaevola albida	Fan Flower	Groundcover	0.3m			Sandy	Mauve/white			
Scaevola ramosissima	Fan Flower	Groundcover	0.4m			Sandy	Purple			
Trachymene incisa	Wild Parsnip	Groundcover	0.6–0.8m			Sandy	White			
Wahlenbergia gracilis	Native Bluebell	Groundcover	0.4m			Most soils	Blue			
Adiantum hispidulum	Maidenhair Fern	Fern	0.3m			Most soils	—			
Cheilanthes sieberi	Mulga Fern	Fern	0.5m			Most soils	—			
Doodia aspera	Rasp Fern	Fern	0.4m			Most soils	—			
Hypolepis muelleri	Ground Fern	Fern	0.7m			Most soils	—			
Viola hederacea	Native Violet	Groundcover	0.2m			Most soils	Purple			
Libertia paniculata	Branching Grass-flag	Herb	0.6m			Sandy	White			
Centella asiatica	Gotu Cola	Groundcover	0.2m			Moist soil	Pink to crimson, Purple or White			
Bulbine bulbosa	Native Leek	Herb	0.8m			Moist soil	Yellow			
Commelina cyanea	Scurvy Weed	Groundcover	0.2m			Moist soil	Bright Blue			
Dichondra repens	Kidney Weed	Groundcover	0.3m			Sandy	Yellow, Green			

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