

How to create a waterwise verge



What is a verge?

A verge is the strip of land between the road and the property boundary space. It is an area of public space where street trees and grass nature-strips can be found.

Some verges are complete concrete from the kerb to the boundary line while other areas have a combination of footpath and grass verges.

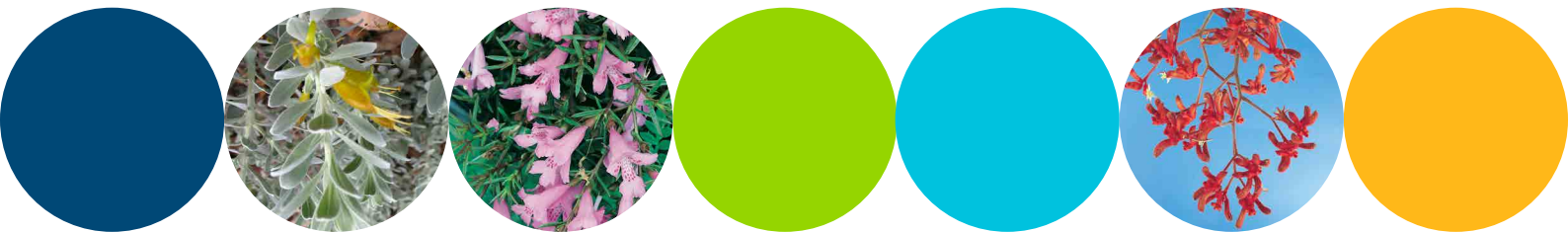
Why create a waterwise verge?

Verges are important green spaces within our community, helping to cool temperatures while creating eco-friendly corridors through our streets.

Benefits of well designed, installed and maintained waterwise verges can:

- Add to the visual appeal of our streets and help push up property prices
- Cool temperatures down in summer in built up areas
- Help to warm your home in the cooler months
- Provide eco-friendly benefits such as providing a habitat for local wildlife and promoting biodiversity.

The environmental benefits of establishing plants that have low water use on verges are gaining popularity. We've put together this step-by-step guide to creating a waterwise verge.



STEP 1:

Understand your local council requirements

Dos and don'ts

Before creating your waterwise verge, it's important to understand the requirements of your local council.

- Most will provide a set of guidelines, detailing what is and isn't allowed as well as providing useful information, such as local native plant species.
- Some councils may have a verge incentive scheme in place for residents.
- It's essential to confirm any underground services in your verge. Contact your local council, and visit the 'Dial Before You Dig' website 1100.com.au

Streetscape consistency

Take a look at how your surrounding neighbours have treated their verges.

- If a neighbour's garden is thriving and meets your local council's verge guidelines, consider adopting a similar design and plant types as this will enhance the look of the street.

Visit watercorporation.com.au/garden for more information.



STEP 2: Designing your verge



Find inspiration

- Get motivated by looking through garden magazines and websites.
- Our website has valuable information on waterwise gardening, including garden designs and plant selection. It also provides details of Waterwise Services that can help you with the development of your waterwise verge.

Draw up a plan

- Get your tape measure and draw an accurate plan identifying all existing features and their dimensions. This will help to understand how you can arrange your verge and what can fit in.
- Consider the style of verge garden you want to create, such as native, cottage, coastal or formal.
- Think about the way your verge is currently being used, for example by pedestrians, bin collection and mail delivery, and how your new design will cater for this.
- The plan comes in handy as most councils require a plan to be submitted for approval.

Accessibility

- Think about the pathways on your verge that are regularly accessed for mail delivery or pedestrians. For instance if your verge has a bus stop or school pick up zone, plants may struggle to survive. It may be more practical to install a surface like mulch or paving that can handle a lot of traffic.
- Consider setting plants back from kerbs of footpaths by 0.5m to ensure plants don't cut off pedestrians.
- If you don't have a footpath, all plants must be set back at least 1.5m from the kerb to allow pedestrian movement and access to vehicles parked on the road. This area may also be used for rubbish bins or bulk/green waste during collection periods. Refer to your local council guidelines for more information.

Utilities and infrastructure

- Consider low growing, non-climbing plant species around street lights, power poles and street signage.
- Councils often use cherry pickers to prune trees so consider hardier plant types if your plants are regularly pruned.
- Verges serve as a utilities corridor with a number of water, electrical, gas and telecommunication services located within these areas. Utility providers have a right to dig up your verge to gain access to their services, and to upgrade or repair existing services. Utilities will try to minimise disruption, however rectification of verge treatments following any work can be the responsibility of the resident.
- Parking spaces can be cleverly designed within verges, depending on the size. Your local council will need to approve any formal parking spaces to ensure its safe.

Suitable verge treatments and structures

- Soft landscape treatments including waterwise plants and mulch are recommended.
- Generally councils don't allow loose rocks or gravel within verge gardens due to safety concerns. Structures or ornamental elements, including play equipment, tree houses and garden sculptures, should not be included due to potential public liability issues.
- Some alternative forms of treatment, such as paving, may be permitted. Check your council's guidelines for more information.

STEP 3: Selecting your plants

Understanding your verge: Think about the existing conditions of your verge, such as soil type and sun exposure.

- Local native plant species are the most appropriate for verge gardens as they can survive our hot dry summers with little to no additional watering.
- Some councils work with local nurseries to provide native plants at a subsidised rate. Councils may also have brochures to help residents in selecting suitable species.

Find out more about plant selection at our Waterwise plants directory at watercorporation.com.au/plants or head down to your local Waterwise Garden Centre. Find your local one at watercorporation.com.au/waterwise

Check the plant height: Low growing shrubs and groundcovers are the best option for verges as it provides better visibility for pedestrians, cycles and vehicles. There may be council rules on heights of plant, which generally are between 0.5m-0.7m. This height may be even lower if your property is located on a street corner or major intersection.

Plants to avoid: Steer clear of plants that are prickly, poisonous or may cause allergic reactions.

Street trees: If you want to plant a tree or have one removed, you will need to contact your local council. They are responsible for the planting and maintenance of trees within all verges as they are aware of all underground services and current regulations regarding sightlines and setbacks from intersections.

Lawn: If you want lawn on your verge, you may like to consider reducing the area, such as along the kerb for bins or people getting out of cars.

Choose a warm season grass that is drought tolerant and suitable for our warm conditions. Although some councils allow synthetic turf it's important to note that synthetic turf still requires maintenance to present well and doesn't have the cooling effect of natural turf or plants.

STEP 4: Approvals

Strata properties: If you live in a strata property you'll need to get joint approval from strata owners and managers before starting. Careful consideration should also be given to any irrigation system that is installed and how the verge is going to be managed.

Council approval: Generally, your verge design will need to be approved by your local council prior to undertaking a verge transformation.

STEP 5: Preparing your verge

Removing existing grass

- Remove grass by spraying with an appropriate herbicide such as glyphosate (commonly known as Roundup). This ensures your new plantings don't become infested with grass like couch in the future.
- We don't recommend killing lawn by smothering with mulch, or temporarily covering it in plastic as it's less effective and destroys beneficial soil microbes.
- Once you're confident the grass is completely dead, you can plant through it.

Levels

- Set the verge ground levels at least 7.5cm below surrounding kerbs and paths to allow for mulch on top and ensure finished levels are only slightly below paths or kerbs.
- Make sure levels allow for stormwater to be held within your verge, rather than impacting nearby street stormwater drains.
- If you have a verge with steep slopes, you may need to consider alternatives so soils and mulches don't wash into the stormwater system and drains. It's best to contact your local council about stabilising your verge in line with their guidelines.

Improving the soil

- Consider including soil conditioners like composted organic matter and clay within the top 30cm of soil.
- This helps to maintain microbial activity, as well as improve the soil's moisture and nutrient holding capacity.
- Perth's sandy soils can become water repellent during dry weather. Applying a quality soil wetting agent will increase your soils' 'wettability', allowing water to penetrate deep into the root zone. This is particularly important at planting to help with establishment.

Which products are best?

- If sourcing bagged soil conditioner or wetting agents, you can select products with the Waterwise symbol. Refer to the manufacturer's instructions for application rates.

Visit watercorporation.com.au/products for more information.

STEP 6: Irrigation and watering



Irrigation system: You should contact a Waterwise service provider to help in designing and installing an irrigation system that will best suit your plant selection and verge conditions. Visit watercorporation.com.au/waterwise

Watering times: Our watering rosters help to save precious water. It's important to only water once on your watering days between 6pm and 9am. Visit watercorporation.com.au/wateringdays to find yours.

Watering exemptions: If you're installing a new verge garden you may be able to apply for a watering exemption. Visit watercorporation.com.au/exemption for further information.

Hand watering: If you haven't installed irrigation, your plants may benefit from hand watering a couple of times a week over the summer period to ensure your plants survive until the next rains.

STEP 7: It's planting time!



When to plant: The best time to plant is late autumn/early winter, as rainfall through the cooler winter months will help to establish your new garden without additional watering. Avoid planting over the summer months as new plants will struggle to survive in the heat without regular watering.

Plant set out: Before digging any holes, set out your plants along the verge to ensure the design is correct and the spacing between plants is even. Consider the growth of plants so they don't obstruct access routes or public infrastructure as they grow.

Mulch application: Once all plants have been installed, apply a 5-10cm thick even layer of coarse mulch, making sure mulch is kept clear from the base of all new plants. Ensure the finished mulch level sits just below adjoining kerbs and footpaths, to prevent mulch from spreading beyond the garden bed.

STEP 8: Maintaining your waterwise verge

Pruning and fertilising: Native verge gardens should only require occasional weeding and pruning. You may wish to prune more frequently to maintain a formal verge design. Your garden may benefit from a light application of controlled release fertiliser once a year. Ensure you select one appropriate for your plant selection.

Mulch: Check mulch every few months and top up as necessary to maintain a 5-10cm even layer across all planting areas.

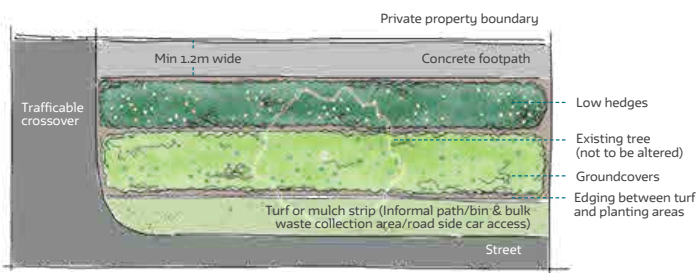
Street tree maintenance: All maintenance to trees on the street, including pruning must be undertaken by the council. Residents should contact the council if they think their verge tree needs attention.

Formal verge design

Planting colour scheme: Grey, blue, yellow and white

Suitable for traditional houses, this design organises plants neatly and creates a hierarchy from road to residential boundary. It incorporates a narrow strip of turf or mulch along the road, which can be used as an informal path, a bin and bulk waste collection area, and for easy road side car access.

If you do wish to lay turf, carefully consider the irrigation you install, such as specialty nozzles or sub surface drip irrigation to prevent overcasting. It's recommended, in keeping with the structured design of this verge, that only one or two plant varieties be chosen for each planting area.



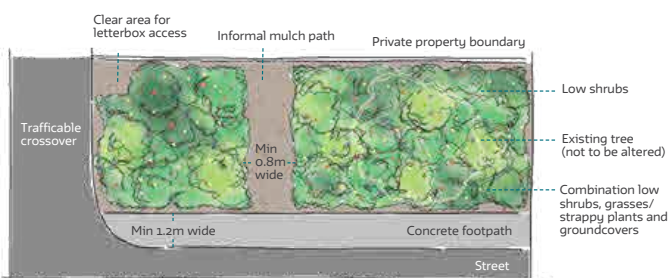
Plant types

Abrv	Common name	Botanical name
Groundcovers		
Bb	Southern Blechnum Banksia	<i>Banksia blechnifolia</i> *
Dg	Darwinia (Prostrate Form)	<i>Darwinia grandiflora</i> *
Sca	Purple Fanfare	<i>Scaevola aemula</i> *
Shrubs		
Ah	Blue Hibiscus	<i>Alyogyne huegelii</i> *
Cop	Diosma	<i>Coleonema pulchellum</i>
Crow	Crowea	<i>Crowea exalata</i> ^Δ
Sant	Cotton Lavender	<i>Santolina chamaecyparissus</i>
Sals	Salvia 'Electric Blue'	<i>Salvia sinoensis</i>
Grasses/strappy leaf plants		
Ap	Dwarf Agapantha	<i>Agapanthus praecox</i>
Arc	NZ Rock Lily	<i>Arthropodium cirratum</i>
Lm	Lilyturf	<i>Liriope muscari</i>
Trees		
Af	Jervis Bay Afterdark	<i>Agonis flexuosa</i> *
L	Bay Tree	<i>Laurus nobilis</i> ^Δ
Pb	Ornamental Plum	<i>Prunus blireiana</i>

Informal verge design

Planting colour scheme: Mixed

This design is suitable for residents who wish to create an informal, cottage style verge landscape. It includes a combination of low shrubs, grasses/strappy plants and groundcover. We recommend that plant varieties be planted in groups of three or five, so as not to look messy. Use mulch to create an informal pathway and ensure your letterbox is still easily accessible through the vegetation.

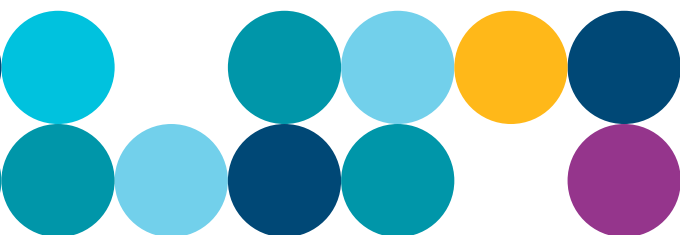


Plant types

Abrv	Common name	Botanical name
Groundcovers		
Bb	Southern Blechnum Banksia	<i>Banksia blechnifolia</i> *
Dd	Dampiera	<i>Dampiera diversifolia</i> *
Dm	Mondorup Bell	<i>Darwinia macrostegia</i> *
Grs	Grevillea 'Star Burst'	<i>Grevillea saccata</i> *
Grt	Grevillea tenuiloba	<i>Grevillea tenuiloba</i> *
Shrubs		
Af	Dwarf Agonis	<i>Agonis flexuosa</i> * ^Δ
Alh	Native Hibiscus	<i>Alyogyne hakeifolia</i> *
Cv	Bottlebrush 'Little John'	<i>Callistemon viminalis</i>
Eut	Egg and Bacon Plant	<i>Eutaxia myrtifolia</i> *
Mh	Chenille Honey Myrtle	<i>Melaleuca huegelii</i> *
Grasses/strappy leaf plants		
Anm	Kangaroo Paw	<i>Anigozanthos manglesii</i> *
Po	Native Iris or Purple Flag	<i>Pattersonia occidentalis</i> *
Trees		
Ba	Ashby's Banksia	<i>Banksia ashbyi</i> *
Eucv	Eucalyptus 'Snow Queen'	<i>Eucalyptus victrix</i> *

* These species are endemic to WA

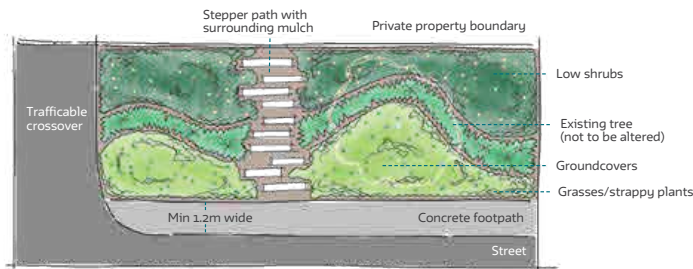
^ΔOptional species (not included in illustration)



Coastal verge design

Planting colour scheme: Predominantly grey, yellow and blue

Suitable for relaxed, coastal houses, this design features a band of grasses/strappy plants, which divides low shrubs and groundcovers across the face of the verge. It includes a casual stepper path, surrounded by mulch. If you choose to plant a variety of species, we recommend you do so in groups of three or five, to maintain structure.



Plant types

Abrv	Common name	Botanical name
Groundcovers		
Ct	Snow in Summer	<i>Cerastium tomentosum</i>
Leh	Red Lechenaultia	<i>Lechenaultia hirsuta</i> *
Leb	Blue Lechenaultia	<i>Lechenaultia biloba</i> *
Shrubs		
Coc	Blue Smoke Bush (prostate form)	<i>Conospermum caeruleum</i> *
Ar	Wormwood	<i>Artemisia absinthium</i>
Ec	Pride of Madeira	<i>Echium candicans</i>
Ld	Upside-down Bush	<i>Leptosema davesioides</i>
Salg	Salvia 'Crimson and Black'	<i>Salvia greggi</i>
Sals	Salvia 'Electric Blue'	<i>Salvia sinaloensis</i>
Grasses/strappy leaf plants		
By	Mexican Lily	<i>Beschorneria yuccoides</i>
Sis	Devon Skies	<i>Sisyrinchium 'Devon Skies'</i> *
Trees		
Ery	Coral Tree	<i>Erythrina indica</i>
Lag	Crepe Myrtle	<i>Lagerstromia indica</i>

Contemporary verge design

Planting colour scheme: Bold yellow, purple and grey

This design is suitable for residents looking to complement a more modern house. Although organic in shape, each of the planting areas should have a clearly defined edge. As there is no concrete footpath along this verge, all planting must be set back a minimum 1.5m from the road. This area has been left as mulch, creating an informal path, a bin and bulk waste collection area, and easy road side car access for residents.



Plant types

Abrv	Common name	Botanical name
Groundcovers		
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Grt	Grevillea tenuiloba	<i>Grevillea tenuiloba</i> *
Shrubs		
Af	Dwarf Agonis	<i>Agonis flexuosa</i> * ^Δ
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Po	Native Iris or Purple Flag	<i>Pattersonia occidentalis</i> *
Trees		
Ba	Ashby's Banksia	<i>Banksia ashbyi</i> *
Eucv	Eucalyptus 'Snow Queen'	<i>Eucalyptus victrix</i> *

* These species are endemic to WA

^ΔOptional species (not included in illustration)



Cheat sheet

STEP 1:

Understand your local council requirements

- Most councils have guidelines of what is and isn't allowed
- There are also verge incentive schemes that you may be able to apply for

STEP 2:

Design your verge

- Create a plan
- Think about what's already on your verge, such as street lights, signs, bus stops and paths

STEP 3:

Select your plants

- Consider existing conditions of your verge, such as soil type and sun exposure
- Local native plant species are great as they can survive our hot dry summers with little watering
- Think about plant heights as there may be some local council restrictions

STEP 4:

Approvals

- Generally your verge design will need to be approved by your local council

STEP 5:

Prepare your verge

- Remove existing grass
- Set the verge ground level at least 7.5cm below kerbs and paths to allow for mulch
- Apply soil conditions to improve soil's moisture and nutrient holding capacities

STEP 6:

Irrigation and watering

- Contact a Waterwise service provider to help with installing an irrigation system
- Stick to watering rosters to help save our precious water

STEP 7:

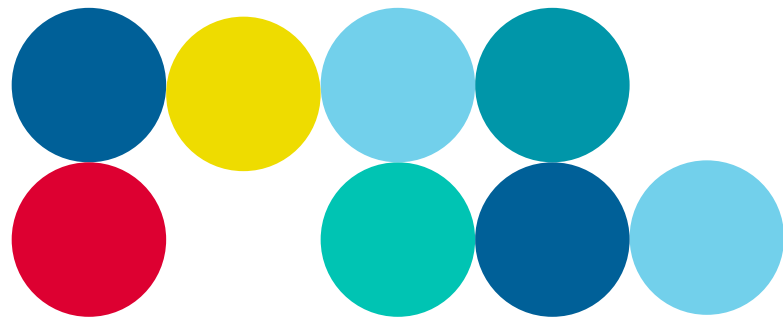
It's planting time

- Best time to plant is late autumn/early winter
- Before digging, set out plants along the verge to ensure design is correct
- Apply a 5-10cm thick layer of mulch, keeping away from base of all new plants

STEP 8:

Maintaining your waterwise verge

- Native verge gardens only require occasional weeding and pruning.
- Prune more frequently if you want a formal verge design
- Check mulch every few months and top up as necessary



For more information on creating a waterwise garden visit watercorporation.com.au/DIYverges

13 13 85 Account Enquiries (8am - 5pm weekdays)
13 36 77 National Relay Service

This information is available in alternative formats on request.
watercorporation.com.au/contact

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Fresh Water Thinking

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