

Road verge planting

Policy No. 8330.100.E.R

1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to property owners/occupiers and staff on City of Darwin's expectations regarding the application and authorisation of road verge planting made under the *City of Darwin By-Laws 2023*. The policy outlines City of Darwin's commitment to:

- improve and maintain road verges across the municipality
- empower property owners/occupiers to sustainably plant the city's road verges
- ensure council-controlled road verges are safe, functional and accessible to the community
- provide a clear understanding of obligations and responsibilities.

2 Scope

This policy relates to the planting and maintenance of City of Darwin controlled road verges. This policy applies to:

- the process for obtaining City of Darwin authorisation to undertake planting on a road verge
- the acceptable treatments associated with road verge planting
- the ongoing maintenance responsibilities of property owners/occupiers and the City of Darwin in relation to the road verge planting.

This policy excludes:

- private land and land managed by authorities other than the City of Darwin
- landscape development works (e.g. lot developments, subdivision developments) or works other than planting of vegetation on road verges (e.g. works carried out by utility providers)
- public street tree planting on road verges by property owners/occupiers, and
- refer to section 3.6 for public street tree planting.

No authorisation is required for:

- planting and establishment of natural grass on the road verge.

3 Policy Statement

The road verge is the area of public land between the property boundary and the back of kerb or edge of road.

The predominant function of the road verge is to provide safe and convenient access to and from properties, provide a corridor for pedestrians and cyclists as well as a service corridor for public utilities.

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Responsible Officer: Executive Manager Operations

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City of Darwin supports applications from property owners/occupiers wishing to plant the road verge directly adjoining their property.

3.1 Desired outcomes

The road verge planting policy desired outcomes align to City of Darwin's strategic outcomes in the following strategies:

- Greening Darwin Strategy 2030
- Movement Strategy 2030
- Accessibility Strategy 2025-2030.

City of Darwin expects applications for road verge planting to provide the following desired outcomes:

Desired outcomes	Descriptor
Enhanced public safety	• everyone can actively travel on the road verge • people driving can see people walking and cycling • the street environment has good surveillance, light and access • people can get out of a car parked on the street • workers can safely access utility pits, pillars, poles and other essential infrastructure.
Increased amenity and liveability	• the area is pleasant and more attractive • increased shade and cooler environment • provide a sense of place and local identity • helps create vibrant and socially connected communities • increase surrounding property values • there is a space for bin collection and access for other services providers (e.g. Australia Post).
Increased habitat and biodiversity	• companion planting for public street trees • habitat for native wildlife • enhance ecosystem connectivity and functionality • the use of native plants is strongly encouraged.

3.2 Application process

Any planting on road verges must be authorised as required under By-law 102(2) of the *City of Darwin By-laws 2023*.

A road verge planting application form must be completed and submitted to the City of Darwin, assessed and an authorisation provided. Works must not commence until authorisation has been received from the City of Darwin. If the applicant is an occupier of the property or the property is part of a strata scheme, property owner / owners' corporation written consent is required.

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The road verge planting requirements/application form is available on the City of Darwin website or by contacting City of Darwin.

Submitted applications will be assessed in accordance with the road verge planting requirements outlined in the application form. Only applications that comply with the requirements will be authorised.

3.3 Responsibilities for maintaining a road verge

The maintenance of the road verge plays an important role in the presentation and liveability of neighbourhoods. By-law 103(1) of the City of Darwin By-Laws 2023 require owners/occupiers to maintain vegetation on the road verge (excluding public street trees) adjoining their properties.

An authorisation to plant on a road verge requires the owner/occupier of the adjoining property to maintain the planted road verge. Ongoing maintenance can include but is not limited to:

- watering, weeding and removal of litter
- controlling pests and diseases
- pruning for pedestrian and road users (excludes public street trees)
- material or plant replacement
- all rectifications required to accommodate the perpetual growth of any plants.

If not maintained appropriately, road verge plantings can appear overgrown and unsightly, harbour vermin and rubbish and cause obstructions and other safety issues.

If the property is sold and has an established road verge planting, it is the responsibility of the new owner/occupier to ensure the road verge planting complies with City of Darwin's current road verge planting requirements. The new owner may choose to retain the plantings or seek authorisation from the City of Darwin to remove the plantings and reinstate the road verge to natural grass or its surrounds.

3.4 Works on road verges by City of Darwin and other agencies

Regardless of any plantings on the road verge, City of Darwin reserves the right to construct or maintain infrastructure on any part of the road verge at its discretion. If necessary, verge plantings will be removed without compensation.

Remedial work will be undertaken to reinstate the road verge; however, the treatment will generally be grass seed only. Where an owner/occupier has maintained their verge to a high standard (evident by the state of the verge prior to works commencing), City of Darwin may use turf as a replacement option. The onus is on the property owner/occupier to water and establish the site.

Utility companies may require access to the verge to perform maintenance works from time to time. The utility companies will undertake remedial work to reinstate the road verge, however the treatment will be grass seed only, unless alternate treatments are specifically stated in any agreements entered between the City of Darwin and the utility provider. The onus is on the property owner/occupier to water and establish the site.

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3.5 Non-compliance with road verge planting policy / road verge planting requirements

City of Darwin may remove the road verge plantings at any time if it is not safe or not maintained to council's satisfaction.

Where a breach of the road verge planting requirements is in existence, generally City of Darwin will approach the directly adjoining property owner/occupier and ask for remedial works to be carried out.

Where the owner is unable or unwilling to carry out remedial works, City of Darwin may commence enforcement action against the offender which may result in the City of Darwin undertaking the works and recovering the cost of the works from the owner as a debt payable to the City or as unpaid rates pursuant to the City of Darwin By-laws 2023.

3.6 Public street trees

Public street tree planting on road verges by property owners/occupiers is excluded from this policy (refer section 2).

To ensure sustainable planting occurs in accordance with relevant Australian Standards, public street trees will be planted by the City of Darwin on road verges. Property owners/occupiers cannot plant public street trees on City of Darwin controlled land, unless it is part of an approved plan of development.

If a public street tree is required on the road verge directly adjoining a property, a request can be made by the property owners/occupiers to the City of Darwin. City of Darwin will undertake the planting of the street tree and would welcome participation by the property owner / occupier, as desired.

Property owners/occupiers who have a public street tree or trees in the road verge directly adjoining their property are not authorised to prune or trim the tree in accordance with the By-Law 103(1) of the City of Darwin By-laws 2023.

If a public street tree requires trimming, pruning, or other attention (including potential removal), a request can be made to the City of Darwin.

4 Definitions

City of Darwin controlled road verge means the area of public land between the property boundary and the back of kerb or edge of road managed by City of Darwin.

Natural grass means living, organic grass species which grow from the soil and require regular maintenance like mowing and watering.

Public street tree means any tree within the City of Darwin local government area that has any part of its trunk growing from City of Darwin controlled land.

Road verge means the area of public land between the property boundary and the back of kerb or edge of road. A typical road verge in the City of Darwin consists of grass, footpath and a council provided street tree.

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5 Legislative References

City of Darwin By-laws 2023 (NT)

Local Government Act 2019 (NT)

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NT)

6 Procedures / Related Documents

8302.100.E.R City of Darwin Public Tree Management Policy

8302.010.I.N City of Darwin Public Tree Management Procedure

AS 2303-2015 Tree stock for landscape use

AS 3743-2003 Potting mixes

AS 4373-2007 Pruning of amenity trees

AS 4454-2003 Composts, soil conditioners and mulches

Greening Darwin Strategy 2030

Northern Territory Planning Scheme 2020

Northern Territory Subdivision Development Guidelines 2024

Road Verge Planting Requirements/Application Form

7 Responsibility / Application

The Executive Manager Operations is responsible for the implementation and review of this policy. City of Darwin workplace participants are responsible for adhering to this policy.

This policy will be reviewed every four years, or as required.

8 Document Control

Document Number			Responsible Officer:	
Version	Decision Number	Adoption Date	History	Next Review Date
1	ORD214/26	26/05/2026	New policy to replace Verges Policy and Trees on Verges – Conservation Policy	26/05/2030
2				
3				

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