

# STREET GARDEN GUIDELINES

2015



CITY OF MELBOURNE

# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
STREET GARDEN LOCATIONS	6
PLANNING AND DESIGN	7
STREET GARDEN LOCATION CRITERIA	8
STREET GARDEN PLANTER DESIGN CRITERIA	12
STREET GARDEN NOTIFICATION SIGN	13
GETTING COMMUNITY SUPPORT	14
COMPLETE STREET GARDEN APPLICATION	15
GETTING COUNCIL APPROVAL	15
STREET GARDEN PERMIT	16
RENEWING AND TERMINATING	16
MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF STREET GARDENS	17



# INTRODUCTION

The City of Melbourne supports street gardening activities within the municipality as a way of promoting sustainable living and community cohesion. Through careful design and management, street gardens can provide a range of educational and community benefits such as enhancing people's health and wellbeing, and potentially improving their food security.

Street gardens located on public land are usually small in size and are planted and maintained by individuals for food, ornamental purposes or personal wellbeing.

Street gardening is only one type of urban agricultural activity available in the municipality. Other options include gardening on balconies, courtyards, vertical gardens, rooftops and community gardens.

The City of Melbourne recommends that gardening in private spaces is explored before considering street gardening on public land. Questions people should ask themselves are:

- Do I have a space to garden in the front or back of my property using containers?
- Do I have a balcony and/or a small courtyard and/or rooftop?
- Do I have space to grow indoor herbs or ornamentals?
- Do I have wall space where I can develop and maintain a vertical garden?

These Street Garden Guidelines offer residents clear, easy-to-read information and advice about ways to garden in approved areas within the municipality. The guidelines also explain the application process and how to engage with your community and neighbours.

## What if I already look after a street garden?

If you already have a street garden, it will need to be registered with the City of Melbourne. Existing street gardens will need to adhere to the Street Garden Guidelines but all residents will be given sufficient time to upgrade or change their garden, if necessary. For more information contact the City of Melbourne on 9658 9658.

# STREET GARDEN LOCATIONS

## Permitted locations

Any nature strip with a minimum width of 3.5 m or a central median with a minimum width of 4.6 m can potentially be used for street gardening activities.

## Other locations

There are other spaces across the municipality where street gardens may be permitted, although these spaces vary in size and location. Some of these spaces include laneways, areas of land at the end of road closures, dead end streets and linear spaces along the back of property boundaries.

These spaces are examined on a case-by-case basis and specific criteria and conditions are often developed in conjunction with the City of Melbourne. These gardens are required to follow the same application process as other street gardens, and must follow the design guidelines for raised planters.

If you have identified a suitable space for a street garden, contact the City of Melbourne on 9658 9658 to discuss your application further.

## Can I put a street garden on a footpath outside my business?

If your business is a café or restaurant and you would like to install a planter box as part of an outdoor area, you must follow the guidelines for plants and planter boxes in the City of Melbourne Outdoor Café Guide. For more information, or to obtain a copy of the guide, visit [melbourne.vic.gov.au](http://melbourne.vic.gov.au) or contact the City of Melbourne on 9658 9658.

## Where are street gardens not permitted?

Areas where street gardens are **not permitted** include:

- Crown land (excluding roads on City of Melbourne's road register), and nature reserves
- Council (public) reserves (with the exception of Stock Route Reserve),

- Arterial roads such as Flemington Road and King Street
- Boulevards such as St Kilda Road, Royal Parade and Victoria Parade
- Government authority land
- Roundabouts and street corners.

There may be other locations in the City of Melbourne where street gardens are not permitted. Each application will be assessed on its merits to ensure minimum impact to nearby residents, businesses and the local community.

### Actions:

Identify your street garden location

Complete the 'site section' of the permit application

Go to next section 'Planning and design'

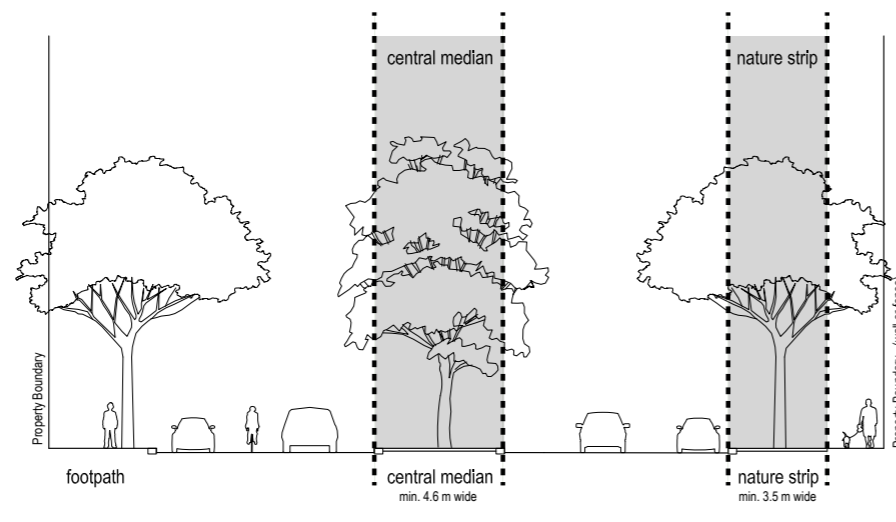


Figure 1. Street garden locations and minimum widths required to accommodate street gardens

# PLANNING AND DESIGN

After identifying a street garden location, the next step is to plan and design your street garden.

In-ground or 'at grade' street gardening is generally discouraged by the City of Melbourne due to a range of risks such as contaminated soil and potential damage to underground services. In most cases, street gardens must be installed above ground in raised planter boxes on nature strips and medians. Planter boxes can only be placed on permeable surfaces such as mulch or grass to enable runoff water to soak into the surrounding soil. Please refer to page 12 for exceptions to in-ground planting.

Applicants should ideally be owners or tenants of properties in close vicinity to any proposed street garden.

## What should I consider before establishing a street garden?

Before establishing a street garden, residents must be aware of the risks associated with undertaking such a project. Any individual, business or group granted a permit to establish a street garden is responsible for its maintenance and has a duty of care to protect the safety and amenity of community members accessing the garden and surrounding areas.

The following issues should be considered when selecting a proposed street garden location:

- Ensure the street garden is adjacent to your property or in a location you can regularly observe and maintain. A position that is well lit will increase safety, and minimise damage, vandalism and theft.
- Consider the presence of Council and other infrastructure such as fire hydrants, street poles, underground irrigation systems and street furniture

- Consider the site usage such as high pedestrian traffic, bin storage etc.
- Ensure there is adequate width at the location (refer to figure 1)
- Ensure the street garden does not impact on or obstruct the collection of rubbish and recycling bins, and does not obstruct access to parked cars
- Do not remove or disturb existing trees and shrubs on the site
- Select a location that receives sunlight for most of the day, particularly if you're planning to grow vegetables
- Review impacts such as high wind zones, possums, rodents, birds, vandalism, theft of plants and/or food produced, dumping of waste and cigarette butts
- Communicate with neighbours that may be impacted by the street garden
- Structures such as climbing frames, stakes, water tanks, nets and compost bins are **not permitted** in a street garden
- The keeping of animals (i.e. chickens) is **not permitted** in a street garden.

## What can I plant in a street garden?

Street gardens can be planted with natives, shrubs and ornamental plants, or a productive garden can be planted with herbs and/or vegetables. Keeping it simple is the key to a good street garden. It is also worth talking to experts about what to plant, based on the location and the season.

Consider the following:

- Plants that require low maintenance and water requirements
- Avoid plants that are poisonous or hazardous (i.e. thorns)
- Avoid plants that are weeds or spread (i.e. via suckers or the germination of seeds).

Refer to the Victorian Weeds Register [www.weeds.org.au/vicmap.html](http://www.weeds.org.au/vicmap.html)

For more information about planting refer to the City of Melbourne's Greening Melbourne's Laneways and Sustainable Gardening in the City of Melbourne booklets. These can be downloaded from [www.melbourne.vic.gov.au](http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au)

## What soil can I use for a street garden?

All street gardens in the City of Melbourne must be established with fresh soil or compost, provided by the resident and sourced from a reputable supplier. Using soil from your backyard is not permitted due to the potential contamination risks. Ideally soil should be supplied in bags and not stockpiled on public land.

### Actions:

Review location criteria

Develop plans for the street garden and provide key measurements

Choose your plants and soil

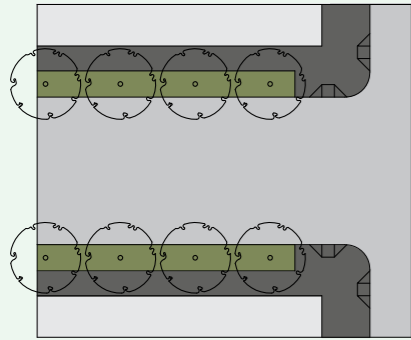
Go to next section 'Street garden notification sign'

# STREET GARDEN LOCATION CRITERIA

## Nature strips

Street gardens are permitted in nature strips with lawn or mulch surfaces, but are best suited to streets with low levels of traffic. A nature strip must be at least 3.5 m wide to provide adequate clearance for street maintenance and for the safety of the street gardener. This can be reduced to 2.5 m where the adjacent footpath is greater than 3 m wide. (Refer to diagram)

Street gardens on nature strips must be planted in approved raised planters. Refer to 'Planter design criteria'.



Nature strip with lawn or mulch surface

### RAISED PLANTER SIZING

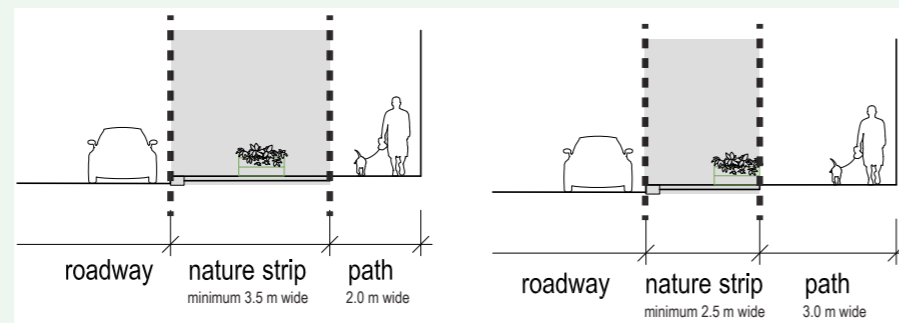
Width	1 m
Length	1 m minimum 6 m maximum
Spacing	1 m minimum between planters 1.5 m from other objects for mower access

## Siting requirements

- **Pathway clearance:** Maintain 3 m of clear space between the edge of the planter and the property boundary. This may extend beyond the paved path.
- **Intersection offset:** Maintain 10 m clearance at corners to ensure clear views for oncoming traffic.
- **Signalised intersection offset:** Maintain 20 m clearance from traffic signals to ensure clear views and 10 m from the departure side of signalised intersection.
- **Tree protection:** To minimise compaction and tree damage, position planters at least 3 m from the edge of any tree trunk or outside the canopy line (whichever is greatest). Clearances will be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on existing trees.
- **Fire hydrant, street lights, furniture:** Maintain 1.5 m clearance on all sides.
- **Parking access and safety:** Maintain 1.5 m clearance between planter and face of kerb to allow for parking and street maintenance access.
- **Driveway clearance:** Maintain 2.5 m of clear space between the edge of the planter and the driveway edge.

Planters are not permitted in front of clearway or tow-away zones

*Note: Applicants are responsible for maintaining all lawn areas around their street garden*



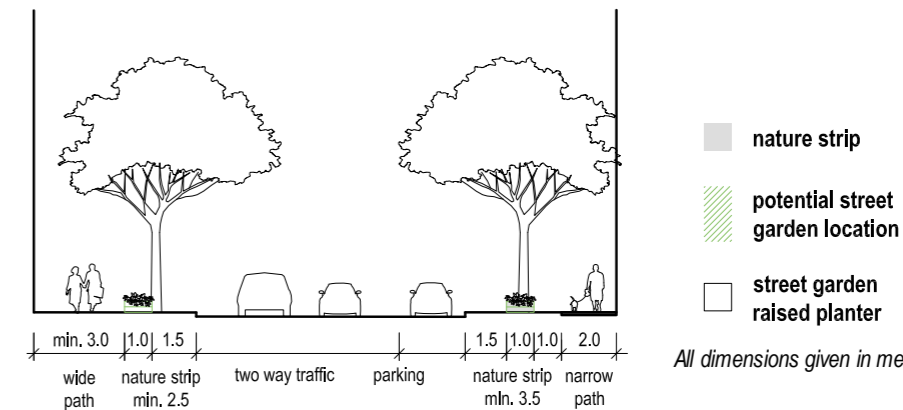
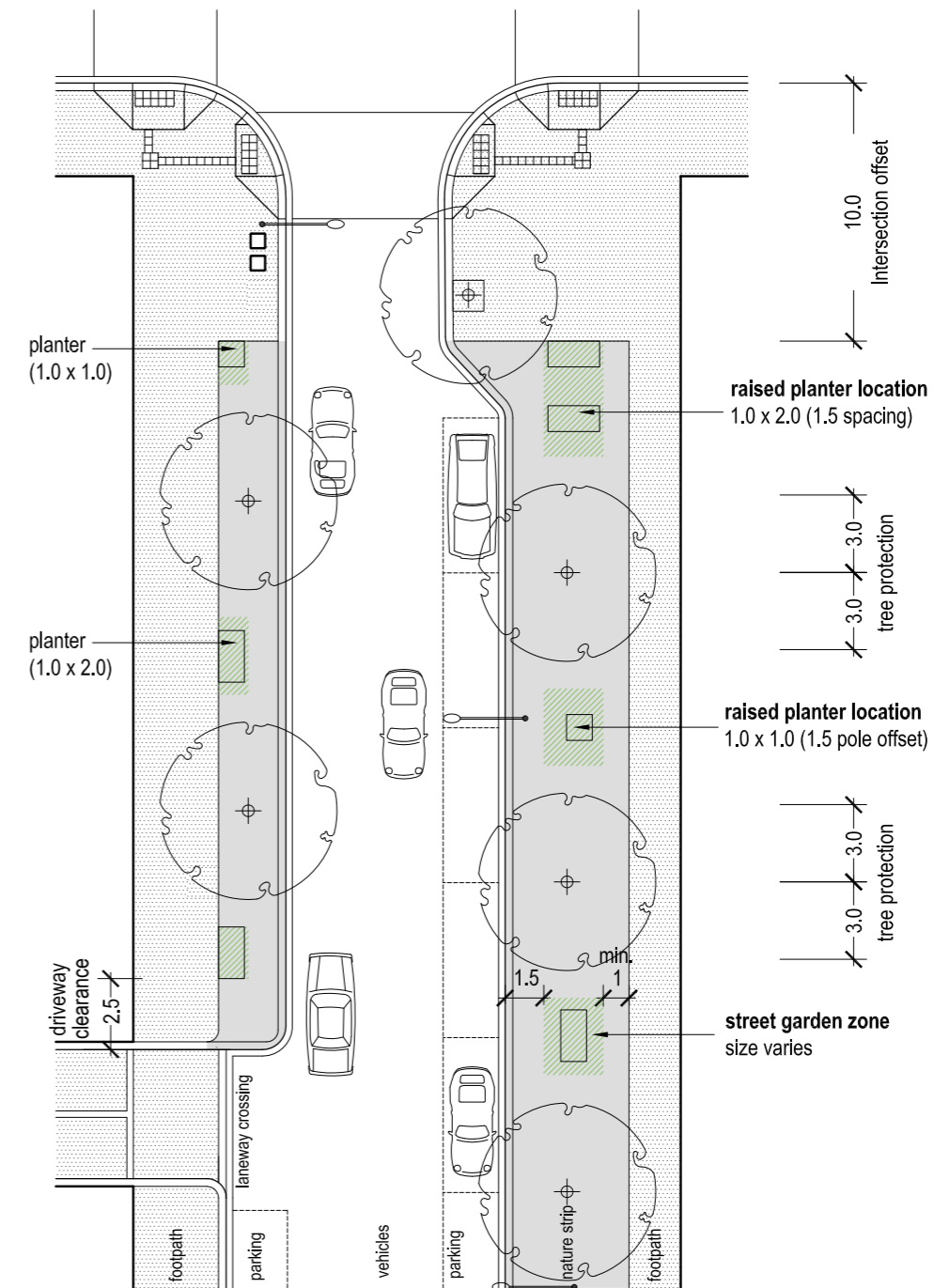
Minimum widths required for nature strip street gardens



Recycled plastic raised planter



Timber raised planters on Chelmsford Street



All dimensions given in metres

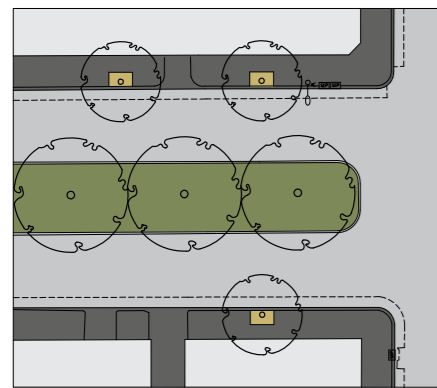
# STREET GARDEN LOCATION CRITERIA

## Central medians

Street gardens are permitted on central medians with lawn or mulch surfaces, but only on low traffic streets with sufficient width. A central median must be at least 4.6 m wide to enable adequate clearance for street maintenance and for the safety of the street gardener.

Street gardens are not permitted on boulevards such as Royal Parade, St Kilda Road, Victoria Parade or Flemington Road. Street gardens on central medians must be in approved planting containers.

Refer to 'Planter design criteria' for more information.



Central median with lawn or mulch surface

### RAISED PLANTER SIZING

Width	1 m
Length	1 m minimum 6 m maximum
Spacing	1.5 m minimum between multiple beds 1.5 m from other objects for mower access

## Siting requirements

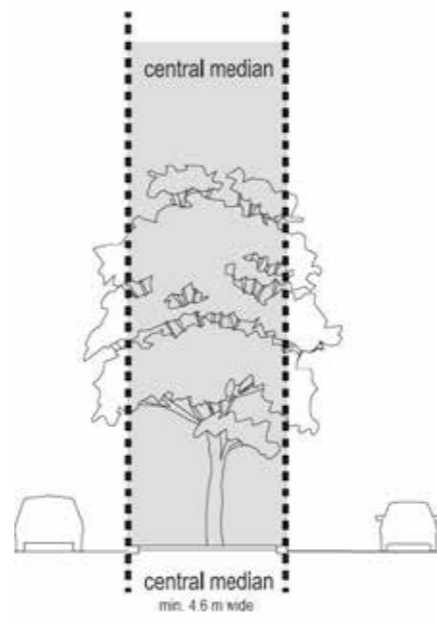
- **Intersection offset:** Maintain 10 m clearance from end of median or opening in median to ensure clear views for oncoming traffic.
- **Tree protection zone:** To minimise compaction and tree damage, position planters at least 3 m from the edge of any tree trunk or outside the canopy line (whichever is greatest). Clearances will be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on existing trees.
- **Street lights and cabinets:** Maintain 1.5 m clearance on all sides.
- **Access and safety:** Maintain 1.8 m clearance between planter and face of kerb to allow for street maintenance.



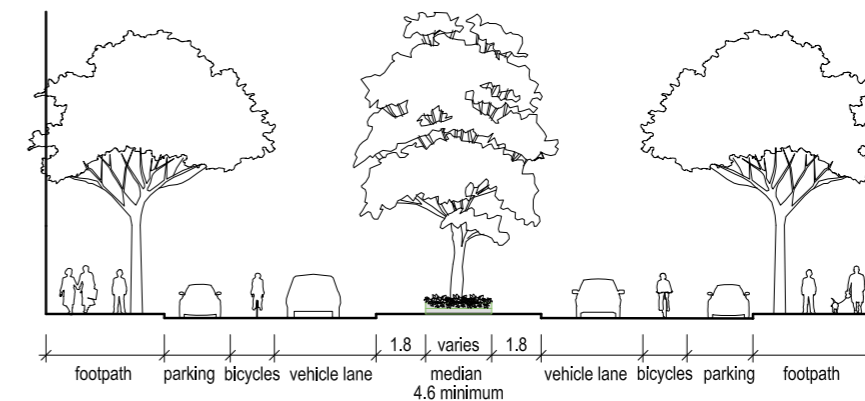
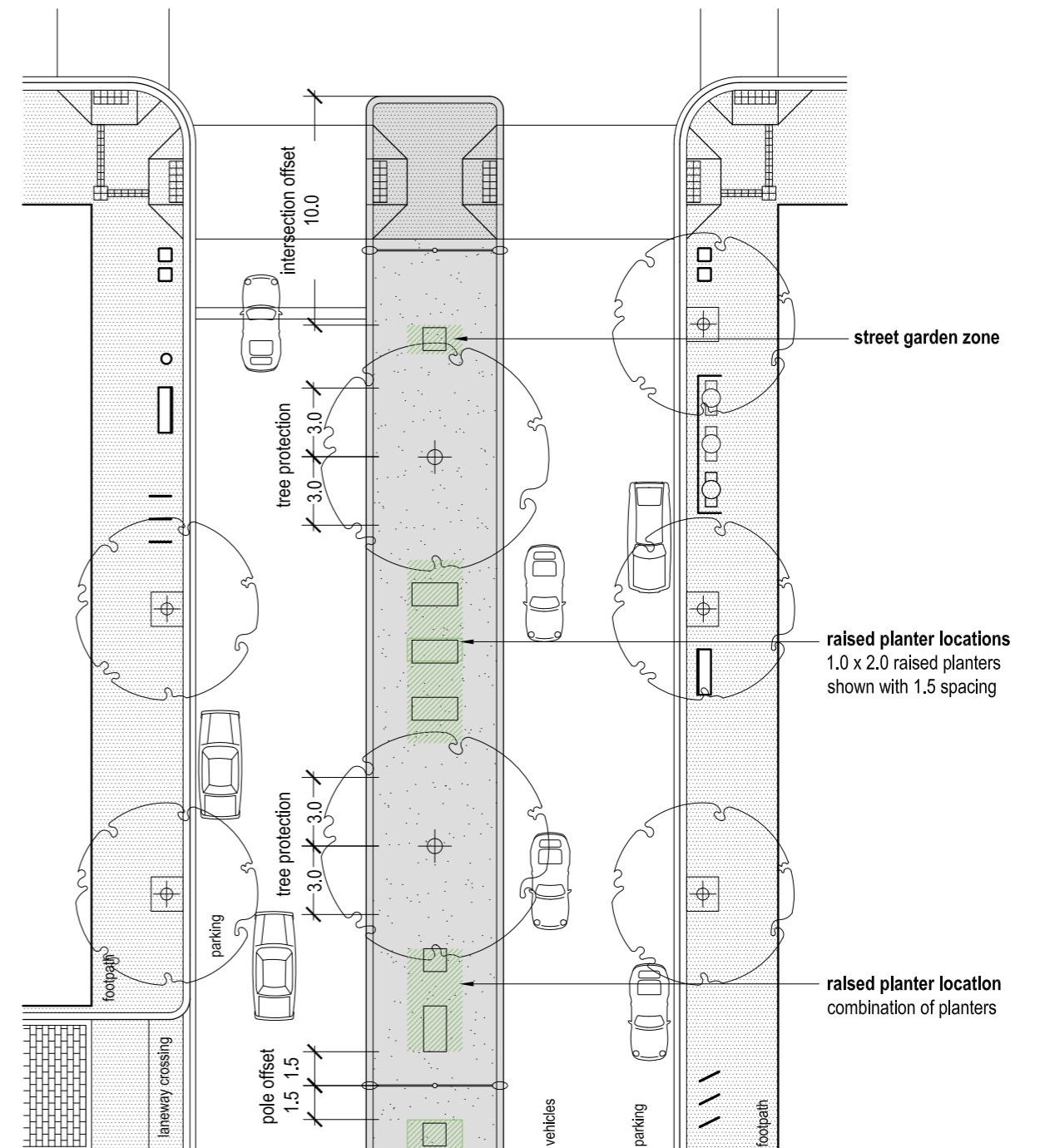
Central median on Brougham Street, North Melbourne



Planted median with insufficient offsets for access



Central medians with street gardens must be 4.6 m wide



- central median
- ▨ potential street garden location
- street garden raised planter

All dimensions given in metres

# STREET GARDEN PLANTER DESIGN CRITERIA

## Raised planters

Raised planters are above ground containers consisting of a raised edge with no solid base. They are designed to be placed on grass or mulch to allow for soil and drainage runoff.

All raised planters must have a weed-mat or geofabric layer on the bottom to form a separation barrier between the existing site soil and the imported growing soil or compost.

Raised planters are only permitted for use in nature strips and central medians and must be positioned according to the 'Street gardens design criteria'.

Raised planters of two sizes are permitted by the City of Melbourne.

**Square:** 1 x 1 x 0.4 m high

**Rectangle:** 1 x 2 x 0.4 m high

Multiple planters must be positioned to ensure a 1.5 m clearance between each planter.

Raised planters can be constructed of black recycled plastic, which is available commercially in ready-to-assemble kits, or built from new treated pine (ACQ or LOSP) according to the specified sizes.

**In-ground planting:** The City of Melbourne only permits in-ground planting in special circumstances for non-productive planting such as flowers and small shrubs. Each application is assessed on a case-by-case basis depending on site-specific constraints and the proposed plant species.



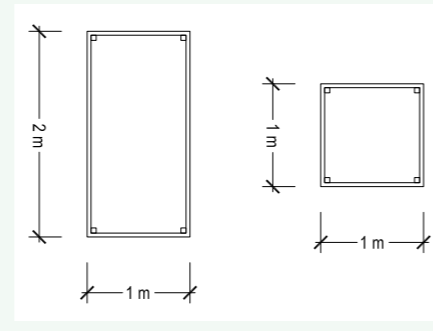
Recycled plastic raised planter



Flat pack recycled plastic raised planter kit



Raised timber planter with corner posts



Raised planter sizes

RECYCLED PLASTIC PLANTER (AVAILABLE IN KIT FORM)	
Board size	200 mm high x 40 mm thick (2 high)
Corner post	40 mm x 40 mm stake x 475 mm high
Fixings	75 mm 14G galvanised tek screws

TREATED PINE PLANTER (MAKE IT YOURSELF)	
Board size	200 mm high x 38 mm thick* (2 high)
Corner post	50 mm x 50 mm x 400 mm high*
Fixings	Galvanised fixings, min. M8 diameter

\* ACQ or LOSP treated pine only. CCA treated pine is not permitted.

# STREET GARDEN NOTIFICATION SIGN

Prior to submitting your street garden application, a notification sign must be erected on the proposed site for a period of four weeks.

The sign should outline the proposed use of the location and provide contact details so that interested community members can comment or provide feedback on your street garden. Feedback received during this period must be included as part of your application.

Contact the City of Melbourne on 9658 9658 at least four weeks before submitting your application to arrange for a street garden notification sign to be erected at a visible site close to your proposed location.

### Actions:

Obtain a street garden notification sign

Display your proposed street garden design as part of the notification sign

# GETTING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

As street gardens are established in areas of public space, it is important to inform immediate and surrounding neighbours of your street garden application and give them the opportunity to provide feedback on the design.

By demonstrating you have the support of your neighbours for your street garden or by showing how you intend to reduce any potentially negative impacts, your application is more likely to be successful. The best way to meet this requirement is to complete the 'community engagement' section of the garden application form.

It is important to remember that not all nearby residents are owner occupiers and may in fact be tenants. Where possible, you should try to consult with landlords, body corporates and tenants about your application.

Any strong opposition to a street garden proposal from immediate or surrounding neighbours will generally see that application refused by Council.

The following table provides an overview of recommended community engagement activities:

DWELLING TYPE NEAR PROPOSED LOCATION	EXAMPLE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT APPROACH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Houses, small apartments or units</li> <li>Single businesses</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk to your immediate and surrounding neighbours so that they are aware of your application (immediate neighbours may be two to three houses on either side and directly across from your location).</li> <li>Think about who may use or walk past your proposed location and how your street garden may impact them (i.e. people who use a nearby bus stop, people with prams and those who walk past the site on a regular basis).</li> </ol>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large apartment and high rise living</li> <li>Multiple businesses within the same building</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk to people within your building about your street garden application. This may be an opportunity to see if other residents want to join the street garden.</li> <li>Have a conversation with your body corporate about your street garden application.</li> </ol> <p>If there is support for your application at this stage, then follow the community engagement approach under houses, small apartments, units and single businesses.</p>

There are many ways to communicate with your neighbours. Some of the most effective methods include letterbox drops, face-to-face dialogue via door knocking or by hosting an informal meeting at the proposed site to discuss opportunities and concerns directly.

The City of Melbourne will consider all comments and feedback from neighbours and the surrounding community as part of your application.

### Action:

Talk to your neighbours about your proposed street garden application

Complete the 'community engagement section' of the application form.

# COMPLETE STREET GARDEN APPLICATION

Once you have decided on a location and design for your street garden, erected a notification sign and consulted with your neighbours, the next step is to complete an application form.

Application forms are available at [melbourne.vic.gov.au](http://melbourne.vic.gov.au), search under "street gardens" or contact the City of Melbourne on 9658 9658.

Your application will consist of a completed street garden application form, with the following information:

- Completed design plan (including measurements)
- Photographs of the current site
- Completed community engagement form

Street garden applications can be submitted to:

City of Melbourne  
Street Gardens Application  
GPO Box 1603  
Melbourne VIC 3001

# GETTING COUNCIL APPROVAL

Once your street garden application is submitted, you need to allow up to four weeks for the City of Melbourne to review your proposal and provide feedback.

## Fees for establishing a street garden

- Application fee - \$50
- Bond - \$75

There will also be costs associated with purchasing raised planter boxes, soil, mulch and maintenance of your street garden.

## Clauses

New gardens established on City of Melbourne-owned land will be granted a permit for a period of 12 months.

The City of Melbourne retains sole discretion as to whether a proposed location is suitable for a street garden and has the right to reclaim land used for a street garden or to relocate the garden if the site is later required for other purposes.

As all street gardens are located in public places, applicants should be aware that Council or third party service authorities (i.e. Telstra and CitiPower) may need to remove a planter box in order to access or maintain assets

such as pipes or other underground infrastructure. It is your responsibility to negotiate the protection and/or reinstating of your street garden with relevant authorities.

The City of Melbourne may revoke or refuse renewal of a permit if:

- The garden ceases to function, with the permit holder abandoning the site
- Sufficient neighbourhood support has not been maintained through community engagement activities
- The garden is not maintained or becomes untidy, unattractive or unsafe for public access.

## Insurance

After approving a street garden application, the City of Melbourne issues a permit to build and operate the street garden as proposed in the application form.

The cost of the street garden permit includes public liability insurance to cover the street garden activity. This insurance is arranged by the City of Melbourne on behalf of the permit holder and is included in the \$50 application fee. Public liability insurance is provided per site or per individual involved in the garden. It does not cover organic risks such as issues arising from eating garden produce.

The permit holder indemnifies the City of Melbourne against any liability in relation to the death or injury of any person, or the damage to any property, in connection with the street gardening items or activities, unless the City of Melbourne is negligent.

The City of Melbourne is not liable for any loss or damage to crops, plants, structures or food grown on the site, including for theft, wilful damage and vandalism.



# STREET GARDEN PERMIT

Once you have received confirmation from the City of Melbourne that your street garden application has been approved, you can start to build your street garden. The City of Melbourne will provide you with a permit marker for your street garden site to identify your garden.

# RENEWING AND TERMINATING

## Renewal

A street garden permit is valid for 12 months. The City of Melbourne will advise you in advance about the renewal process for your garden. Renewal fees are not applicable.

## Termination

If you are moving house or no longer wish to continue your street garden, you need to contact the City of Melbourne to remove your street garden from the register.

If your street garden is left in poor condition for two months, the City of Melbourne can revoke your permit and use your bond to restore the site to its original state.

## Land reinstatement

Restoring a street garden site back to its original state is important to the community so that it can once again be accessible to the public. The permit holder is responsible for reinstating the site, including any associated costs.

# MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF STREET GARDENS

The City of Melbourne prides itself on its well-maintained streetscapes and tree-lined boulevards. In keeping with this tradition, the presentation of street gardens in the municipality is important. A street garden that is trimmed, neat, watered and mulched helps contribute to the overall look of a healthy, nurtured and well-presented street.

Once a street garden permit is granted, the permit holder is expected to take responsibility for maintaining the street garden in a safe, clean and tidy way that is free of disease, vandalism, foreign matter, dead plant materials and hazards.

Maintaining a street garden includes the following:

- Limiting plants and vegetation to a maximum height of 1 m. In some cases, this height may be reduced to ensure line of sight is always maintained on the street for pedestrians, cars, cyclists, and for visually impaired and disabled people
- Topping your garden with organic mulch for a minimum of 50 mm to suppress weeds and enhance water retention
- Pruning and cutting to control plant growth to make sure plants, branches and leaves do not spill out onto the footpath/surrounding areas and become a trip hazard for pedestrians. All prunings and cuttings need to be removed offsite and placed either in compost bins or green waste. This helps stop stormwater drains from becoming blocked by accumulating debris
- Being responsible by mowing the grass around your planter box
- Choosing pesticides that are organic, such as pyrethrum or garlic sprays. The City of Melbourne encourages organic gardening practices and avoidance of synthetic fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides
- Regular hand watering with a watering can or a hose with a trigger nozzle (i.e. observing water restrictions). Water tanks and other structures are not permitted on the street garden site. When watering gardens in median strips, hoses should not extend across any roadways

- Birds, rodents, possums, bugs, worms and snails may take up residence in your garden, so it is important to regularly check your garden and work out a plan to protect it
- Consideration should be given to basic safety precautions such as appropriate clothing, safe use of tools, careful handling of materials and soils, and sun smart practices.

The City of Melbourne is not responsible for the upkeep, repair or replacement of street gardens (including raised planter boxes). Clean-up notices (for unsafe and hazardous street gardens) or removal orders may be issued to owners of non-conforming street gardens.

Street gardens are reviewed on a regular basis. If a street garden is not being well maintained, the City of Melbourne will contact the permit holder to discuss appropriate ways to manage the upkeep of the street garden.

## City of Melbourne responsibilities

The City of Melbourne will:

- Provide information on street gardening within the municipality
- Accept telephone, email and face-to-face enquiries
- Coordinate the application process and provide a street garden notification sign
- Review and provide feedback on all street garden applications
- Undertake site visits to potential and established street gardens
- Provide a permit marker to be erected on street garden site
- Maintain a street garden page on City of Melbourne's website
- Coordinate street garden resources
- Assist with any street gardening complaints.

## How to contact us

**Online:** [melbourne.vic.gov.au](http://melbourne.vic.gov.au)

**In person:**

Melbourne Town Hall - Administration Building  
120 Swanston Street, Melbourne  
7.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday  
(Public holidays excluded)

**Telephone:** 03 9658 9658  
7.30am to 6pm, Monday to Friday  
(Public holidays excluded)

**In writing:**

City of Melbourne  
GPO Box 1603  
Melbourne VIC 3001  
Australia

**Fax:** 03 9654 4854

**Translation services:**

03 9280 0716	አማርኛ
03 9280 0717	廣東話
03 9280 0718	Ελληνικά
03 9280 0719	Bahasa Indonesia
03 9280 0720	Italiano
03 9280 0721	國語
03 9280 0722	Soomaali
03 9280 0723	Español
03 9280 0724	Türkçe
03 9280 0725	Việt Ngữ
03 9280 0726	All other languages

**National Relay Service:** If you are deaf, hearing impaired or speech-impaired, call us via the National Relay Service: Teletypewriter (TTY) users phone 1300 555 727 then ask for 03 9658 9658 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (Public holidays excluded)

