Verge Garden Makeover Guide

2025

City of Belmont

About this guide

Transforming your verge into a vibrant, biodiverse space is easier than you think! This guide will walk you through each step of the process – from preparing the soil to designing and planting a beautiful, low-maintenance native garden. In this guide you'll be taken through the following steps:

Step 1
Understanding verge guidelines and your role

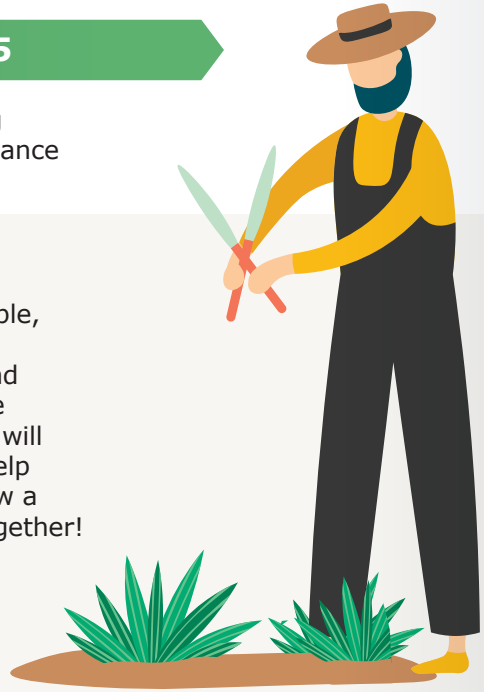
Step 2
Designing your new verge

Step 3
Soil preparation

Step 4
Planting and mulch

Step 5
Ongoing maintenance

By replacing traditional lawns with native plants, you'll create a sustainable, waterwise landscape that enhances biodiversity, supports local wildlife, and reduces maintenance. Whether you're starting with sand or lawn, this guide will provide the knowledge and tools to help you bring your verge to life. Let's grow a greener, more resilient community together!



Step One

Understanding verge guidelines and your role

Verge maintenance is the responsibility of the householder of the property adjacent to the verge. The City is responsible for the planting and maintenance of street trees on verges.

The City's Verge Greening Guidelines require plants to be:

- Maintained to a height of no more than 75cm;
- Not poisonous, thorny or a declared weed (for pedestrian safety);
- Planted in the ground or in a shallow raised bed (up to 35cm in height);
- Do not cover or obstruct any manhole, gully or inspection pit;
- No trees are to be planted on the verge (only the City is able to plant trees on the verge. All street trees are maintained by the City).

Please read the City's **Verge Greening Guidelines** for further information about appropriate, and inappropriate verge treatments.

Further verge guidelines you should be aware of when planning your makeover include:

- If there is no existing footpath, you need to keep a clear thoroughfare (such as mulch or low groundcover) for at least 1.5m from the kerb;
- If your verge includes mulch, this must be installed to a finished level of below the footpath and kerb line to prevent creating slip or trip hazards, and have a particle size of no more than 2cm;
- If your verge includes a bus stop, only lawn can be placed within 1.5m of that bus stop;
- The use of artificial turf is not permitted on the verge.
- Guidelines around street trees on the verge:
- If you have one or more street trees, you can only use lawn or mulch within a 1.5m radius around the trunk of each street tree;
- If you need to remove any lawn or soil from your verge, you need to be careful to avoid damaging the roots and trunk of existing street trees.

Step Two

Designing your new verge

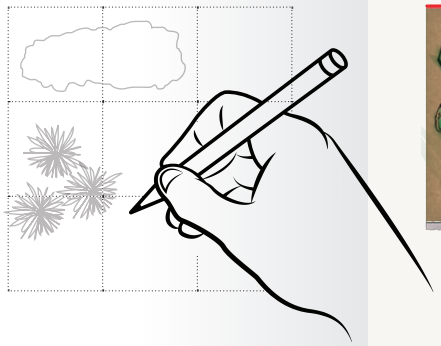
A well-designed verge is not only visually appealing but also safe, functional, and accessible for all users. By considering key design elements, you can create a thriving, biodiverse space that enhances both your property and the surrounding streetscape.

Things to Consider

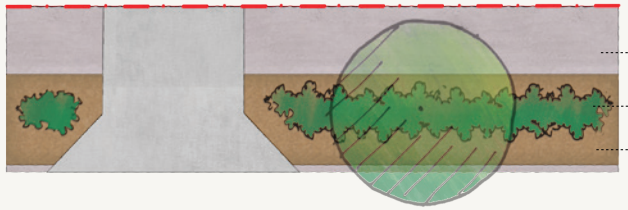
Take a moment to assess your verge:

- **What's already there?**
  - Does your verge consist of open lawn with a few scattered trees, or does it have a mix of plant layers, such as shrubs, grasses, and ground covers?
  - Are there any mature trees that should be retained as focal points?
- **What do you want from your verge?**
  - Do you envision a low-maintenance, waterwise garden?
  - Would you like to attract birds, butterflies, and other wildlife?
  - Are you looking for a structured design or a more natural, flowing layout?
- **How do you currently use your verge?**
  - Will you need space for garbage bins, street tree (if no tree a space must be left for one in future) a bus stop, or a pathway?
  - Are there footpaths or driveways to consider?

Sketching a simple design can help visualise your ideas. Treat your verge as a blank canvas, keeping in mind elements like sunlight exposure, shade, soil conditions, drainage, and plant selection. A well-planned verge not only enhances your property but also contributes to a greener, more sustainable community.



Verge design examples

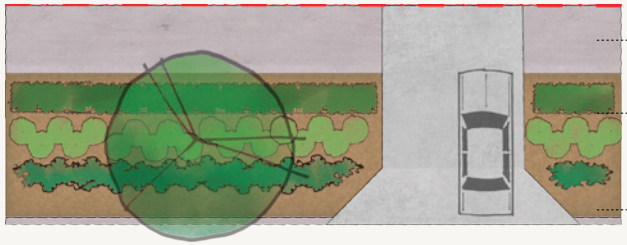


Narrow verge

Footpath

Groundcover

1m mulch only strip at back of kerb to allow for growth and area for bins

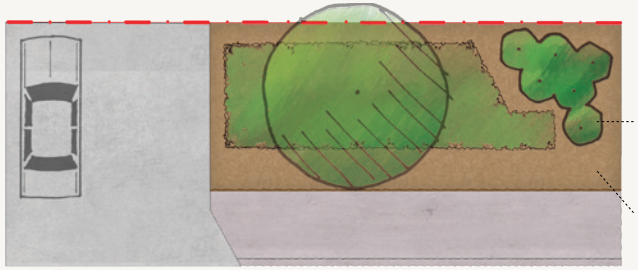


Standard verge

(with footpath)

Layered planting, Shrubs, strappy leaf plants, groundcovers.

1m mulch only strip at back of kerb to allow for growth and area for bins

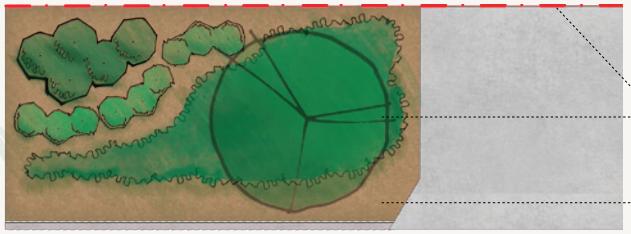


Large verge

(with footpath behind kerb)

Layered planting, street tree, hhrubs, strappy leaf plants, groundcovers.

1m mulch only strip behind footpath to allow growth



Large verge

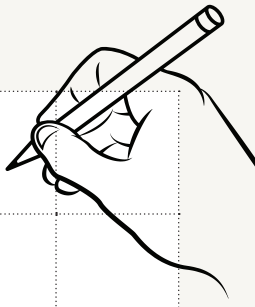
(no footpath)

Property boundary

Layered planting, street tree, shrubs, strappy leaf plants, groundcovers.

1.5 m mulch only strip for pedestrian access and bins

Verge garden design grid



Step Three

Soil Preparation

Lawn removal

The hardest but most critical part of creating your verge garden will be the removal of any existing grass. There are a number of ways to remove grass lawns, depending on your time and budget:

- Removing with a turf cutter or shovel.
- Smothering technique: The smothering technique works by covering the grass, cutting off light, and gradually killing off unwanted plants. While it takes a few months, starting now means you'll be ready for winter planting. Plus, the longer you smother, the more the grass breaks down into nutrient-rich soil.
  - Mow the grass area using your lawn mower's lowest setting.
  - Cover the grass with a single layer of corrugated cardboard or six layers of newspaper, overlapping the sheets by at least six inches. Ensuring you remove any glossy ads or tape from newspapers and use pure paper or cardboard.
  - Wet the cardboard thoroughly to start the decomposition process.
  - Top the cardboard with at least 5cm of organic matter (wood chips, leaves, compost, straw) to hold it down and complete the seal. This helps the breakdown process and enriches the soil below.

Once the lawn has been removed, you can now prepare the soil.

To correctly prepare your soil, you need to know what your soil type is. In the City of Belmont, we have two main soil types:

Central Coastal Plain

Grey to pale brown sandy soil.

Rivervale, Redcliffe, Cloverdale, Kewdale, most of Belmont.

Eastern Coastal Plain

Variable soil types from sandy, loamy, and clayey soils.

Most of Ascot and portion of Belmont closest to the River.

Map of soil types by area

Soil water retention

Improving water retention in the soil is an important step to benefit your plants. Perth's soils can be hydrophobic (water repellent) and are highly permeable. This can prevent water from soaking in and water draining through the soil so quickly it cannot be absorbed by plants.

Use an environmentally friendly soil wetter to help improve water retention. There are additional ways to improve water retaining, at each planting hole:

- Mix bentonite/kaolin clay into the existing soil
- Add and mix organic matter through the soil (native friendly compost).

Soil levels

You may have to adjust the level of your verge soil to ensure that once a 5-10cm mulch layer is added the overall ground level is sitting flush with the kerb. This is to avoid overspill onto the road/ footpath and to retain water within the verge garden.

Step Four

Planting and mulch

After all the hard work of preparing your garden, now the fun part!

1. Follow your plans and spread your plants out. Consider their mature size when planting. Remember, great gardens take time to grow. Placing plants too close together can affect their growth, cause overcrowding and eventually "shade out" other plants.
2. Dig the hole at least 2 – 3 times larger than the width and depth of the pot.
3. Remove your plant from the pot and place your plant in the hole, the soil level of the plant should be the same as the natural soil level. Push the soil back around the plant to fill in the hole, then making a fist with your hand, gentle push the soil around the roots of the plant making a "well" around the base of the plant to create an area for water to pool and slowly sink into the soil. Water your plant in well and if you have some kelp or a seaweed solution include that also at this stage.

Now you're ready to mulch!

Applying a coarse layer of mulch, 5-10cm thick, will retain soil moisture by preventing evaporation, provide organic matter and nutrients for soil microbes and plants, lower the soil temperature, and will also suppress weeds.

- Ensure you leave space around main plant stems and street tree trunks.
- Make sure the mulch is level with your kerbs and footpath, this will prevent spread or flow onto footpaths or into stormwater systems.

The City offers residents the opportunity to collect free mulch in Spring. Visit the City's website for further information. Dates are also advertised in the Belmont Bulletin.

For further planting tips and tricks, scan the QR code to watch a short video

Step Five

Ongoing maintenance

After Planting

It is important to keep your plants watered while they settle into their new homes. In the event of no rain, a good 2 litre drink every week should suffice. Adding a kelp or seaweed solution into the water will greatly assist with transplant shock and the success of your plant establishment.

First summer

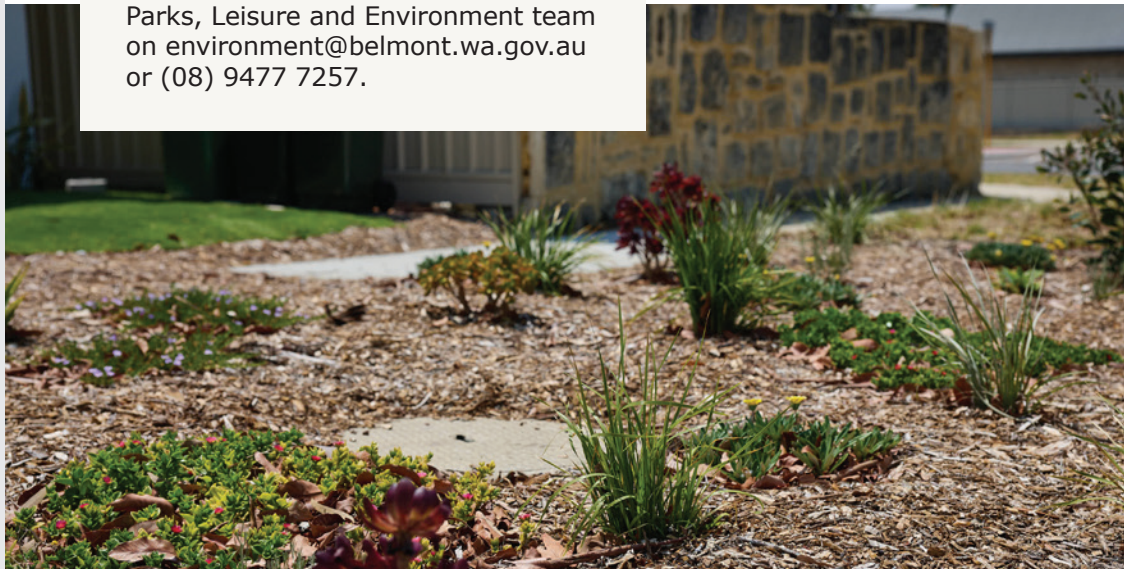
Water your plants 1-2 times per week in their first summer with 1-2 litres of water per plant each time. In their second year it will really depend on how they are progressing, but general rule of thumb is a good water every 2 weeks through the hotter months around early November to late March.

After establishment

Yearly application of an organic, pelletized low phosphorous fertilizer for native plants followed by 50 – 100mm of organic mulch will all help to keep your plants and soil microbes healthy.

Need help?

Visit our website or contact our Parks, Leisure and Environment team on environment@belmont.wa.gov.au or (08) 9477 7257.



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