

Alexandrina Township Verges Planting Guide

Garden design ideas,
planning tips & plant suggestions
for greening your nature strip



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Disclaimer: The information provided in this booklet is to be used as a guide. All information given is believed to be correct and is based on our local knowledge of Alexandrina Council conditions.

We accept no responsibility for any loss, cost or damage resulting from following information provided in this guide. We acknowledge the City of Unley for their help in preparing this guide.



About this Guide

This guide provides suggestions and ideas for Alexandrina residents living in townships to green their verges.

Plants can transform a verge into an attractive feature, setting off an individual property and contributing to the overall appeal of the neighbourhood.

Road verges are spaces that are all too often neglected. By maintaining small gardens, residents can help to improve our urban biodiversity, improve the management of storm water, and add to the cool green feel of their town. Verge gardens can also benefit the health of street trees and support local wildlife.

Verges are typically narrow spaces of land within the streetscape that need to be safe for pedestrians, road users and allow space for residential bin collection. This can make selection of appropriate plants a challenge.

To assist residents, Alexandrina Council has developed examples of possible garden designs suitable for township verges. You can also visit a display garden on Dawson Street in Goolwa, behind the library, and at Colman Terrace in Strathalbyn at the library entrance.

**Thank you for helping
to make our towns
beautiful and green.**

Introduction

What is a verge?

A verge (or nature strip) is the area of land situated at the front of your property between the footpath and the roadside kerb.

Verges allow room for important public services such as water and gas, and provide a place for street trees to be planted. Depending on the street the size of verges can vary from none to very wide.

Why landscape it?

Alexandrina Council encourages residents to enhance the aesthetic value of the streetscape by planting verge gardens. Well maintained verge gardens increase the liveability of our residential areas.

Landscaping a verge contributes in many positive ways to your street including, providing a healthier environment for street trees, absorbing rainwater, and providing much needed habitat for small creatures like bees and butterflies. Plants also work as natural air conditioners when air moves through the moisture in the leaves. The more plants in an area; the cooler it can be which is particularly useful in summer.

Studies by the Heart Foundation have found neighbourhoods with more plants encourage more people to walk for short trips.

Whose responsibility is the verge?

Verges are classified as part of public road under the *Local Government Act 1999* and as such are owned by Council.

- Council is responsible for the planting and maintenance of street trees and for ensuring that verges pose no threat to public safety.
- Householders are responsible for maintenance of their verge and are encouraged to beautify and plant out their verge, and will be responsible for ongoing maintenance.

Prior to starting any works you need to complete an Application to Alter a Verge form, which is available from the Alexandrina Council website, or at Alexandrina Council offices in Goolwa and Strathalbyn.

Guidelines for Verge Landscaping

If you are planning on greening your verge, there are a few simple rules to make sure your project will not inadvertently harm street trees or other users of the area.

Pre-planning

Let Council know you wish to plant out your verge by completing an Application to Alter a Verge form, available from Council's website (www.alexandrina.sa.gov.au). The form is only two pages long, but you will need to include detail of all of the changes you wish to make.

When you submit your Application to Alter a Verge form, it will be checked to make sure your plan is suitable for the site. We use this form to help you plan a garden that will be an asset into the future. You may be asked to alter the design if, for example, there is not enough space for passengers to get in or out of a parked car, you have chosen plants that will eventually obscure vision for

drivers, the plants you suggest are likely to escape and become weeds, or access to important services is blocked. This guide contains information that will help you create a plan that is quickly and easily approved.

Plant selection

Plantings are to be kept lower than 600mm in height to ensure adequate vision for vehicles entering and leaving driveways. Read plant labels for an indicative full grown height, or ensure plants are regularly clipped low. Avoid plants that are sharp, thorny or poisonous. We strongly encourage you to choose local native species for your verge, especially if you live in the coastal zone or close to an urban biodiversity reserve.

Installation

If you are doing the work yourself and have an approved application, be sure to contact Dial Before You Dig on 1100 before undertaking any type of digging in the ground.

During landscaping works special consideration should be given to preserving the vital root system of any trees within the verge. Tree roots should not be cut within 1m of the trunk.

Keep tools and other items off the road and footpath to prevent passers-by from tripping on them. The area must be kept safe at all times.

To prevent stormwater pollution, materials such as soil or mulch must be swept up from hard surfaces such as the footpath and gutter. Gardens should be designed to minimise loss of soil or mulch during heavy rainfall events.

Maintenance

After planting it will be the residents responsibility to care for a new verge garden. Keep them watered, free from weeds and pruned if they start getting too high or spreading over the footpath/kerb.

Council sprays weeds on road verges to keep towns neat and tidy. Make sure your garden is maintained so that we can tell garden plants from common weeds.

Design Tips

Design

Before you start, take time to plan out what you want your verge to look like. Think about the things you can't change such as the amount of sun the verge receives at different times of the day. Take a walk around the neighbourhood to see what others are doing and what is working well.

Consider what style and colours will compliment your existing property and front garden.

A well maintained front verge garden can increase kerb appeal.

Gardens can look great when there are different colours, leaf textures and heights. Consider grouping small numbers of the same species together to add impact.

The general rules are to avoid plants that are spiky, poisonous, block vision or create trip hazards.

Try sketching up a design on paper first. If you can draw your verge to scale this will help in calculating the number of plants you are going to need for the design.

Choosing your plants

Some plants need more care and maintenance than others so consider the amount of time and effort you can dedicate to caring for your verge.

A good tip is to choose hardy waterwise plants. Local natives are a great option as they require minimal water, limited fertilising and they can provide valuable habitat for small native creatures. Natives typically need watering for the first year and once established will only need a top up drink in extreme weather.

Select plants that won't grow any taller than 600mm to ensure that lines of sight along your street are retained for safety reasons. The occasional flower stalk above this height is fine.

This guide includes some plant suggestions, but you can also get ideas from seeing what plants are growing well around your neighbourhood or visiting your local nursery. On the Plant Selector Plus website by the Adelaide Botanic

Gardens, you can search by postcode to find plants suitable for your local area. Another excellent resource is the Coastal Gardens Planting Guide, produced by Natural Resources Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges. This guide is available online.

Many plant species will be available from garden centres, although some plants may be unavailable at certain times of the year. The best time to plant is in winter when rainfall is plentiful and heat will not kill off young plants.

There are a number of garden centres in the Alexandrina Council region that can offer supplies for your garden. To buy local native plants, you can visit:

- Alexandrina Community Nursery, Kessel Road, Goolwa
- Clayton Bay Community Nursery, Alexandrina Drive, Clayton Bay
- Hindmarsh Island Community Nursery, Ferrymans Reserve, Hindmarsh Island
- Shoreline Community Nursery, Weeroona Drive, Milang

Paths & bins

Your garden design should leave space for visitors to come by car. Lawn or unplanted areas allow passengers to get out of the vehicle without obstructions or stepping on plants. Don't forget to leave space for your kerbside bins.

Ideas for suitable path and bin pad treatments are included in the designs in this booklet. Any pavers or other hard surface needs to avoid creating trip hazards for road and footpath users.

Artificial turf is not a good choice as it provides no cooling benefit for your street, is typically glued down and surprisingly still needs weeding.

Water retention

Verge gardens are a great way to get more moisture into the soil and reduce stormwater runoff. It is a good idea to swale the verge garden slightly (shape the soil to have a small depression in middle of verge). This should be easier to maintain, reduce mulch dispersing and collect water when it rains.

Mulch can retain moisture and reduce weeds. There are a range of different organic mulches (leaf litter, bark chip, straw) and inorganic (pebbles, screenings, gravel). Aim for 50-100mm depth of mulch, but be careful not to mound up around the base of your street tree.

Many of the soils in our region have very high sand content. This provides both opportunities and challenges. You may wish to consider soil alterations that improve the fertility and water holding capacity of the soil. Compost is a great solution.

Service access

Verges typically have underground cables and pipes. While infrequent, they do need to be accessed occasionally. Much of this work can be completed with minimal impact by special sensing equipment and/or underground boring. However, you must remember that utilities providers always have right of access whenever work needs to be carried out. If you have a service box on your verge you cannot change this or block access.

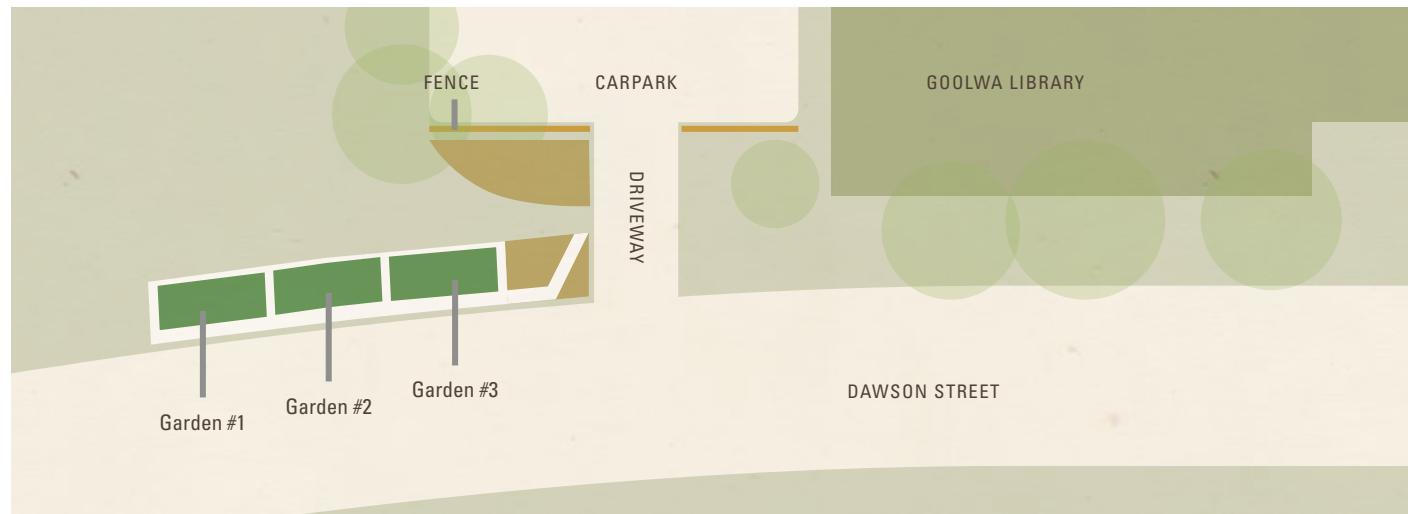
Verges are also part of the streetscape and sometimes are adjusted as part of road or footpath upgrades. Street trees need occasional maintenance and in rare cases replacement. This is one of the reasons why it is important to complete an Application to Alter a Verge form so that Council can check if any works are scheduled in the foreseeable future.

Garden Designs

The following six design ideas are examples which meet the guidelines which you can copy, adapt or use as inspiration for your own design. The first three designs have been used in the display garden on Dawson Street in Goolwa. An example of the Flower Garden can be seen on Colman Terrace, Strathalbyn at the library entrance. An example of the Local Coastal verge garden can be seen on the eastern side of Beach Road, Goolwa Beach, north of the Hewett Road intersection. There may be slight differences between the garden design plans in the booklet and the actual display street gardens but the general theme will be the same.

Many of the suggested ideas for path and bin pad treatments could be interchanged between designs.

If you decide to use one of these designs, be sure to check the length and width of your verge and adjust the number of plants accordingly.



You can see example verge gardens on Dawson Street in Goolwa, behind the library.

1. Native Formal

LIGHT: DAPPLED ☀

MAINTENANCE: 🌤️ (IF CLIPPED TO HEDGE STYLE)

WATERING: 💧

Formal gardens are typically symmetrical, have repeated patterns, and often include hedges. Some native species, such as *Westringia* or local *Olearia axillaris* can be clipped and shaped. This garden includes some *Callistemon* and *Grevillea* varieties that also add to a native formal garden. Native plants are great because they support local wildlife and many are drought tolerant. This example design includes plants that provide colour with flowers and contrasting foliage.

PLANTS:



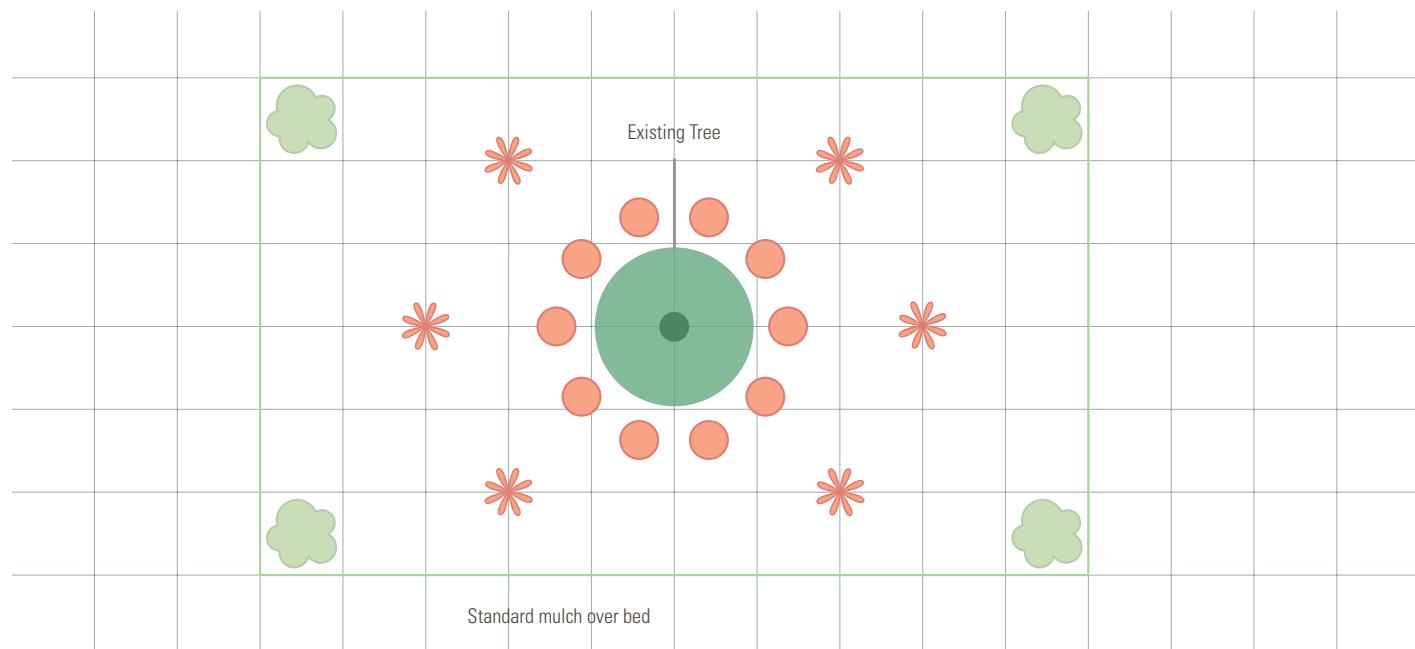
-Westringia 'Wynyabbi Gem' or local native Coast Daisy Bush, *Olearia axillaris*



-Lavender Grevillea, *Grevillea lavandulacea*



-Callistemon 'Little John', *Callistemon viminalis*



2. Herb Garden

LIGHT: DAPPLED/PART SUN ☀

MAINTENANCE: 🌟

WATERING: 💧

When choosing plants for your garden, you might also like to consider how the plants taste and smell. This example uses edible and ornamental herbs to create an attractive and functional garden. In this design, a Bay Tree is used as a feature in the middle. You might also consider dwarf fruit trees as part of your verge garden.

PLANTS:



✖ Rosemary 'Tuscan Blue',
Rosmarinus officinalis



✖ Sage,
Salvia officinalis



● Marjoram,
Origanum majorana



✿ Marigold,
Tagetes



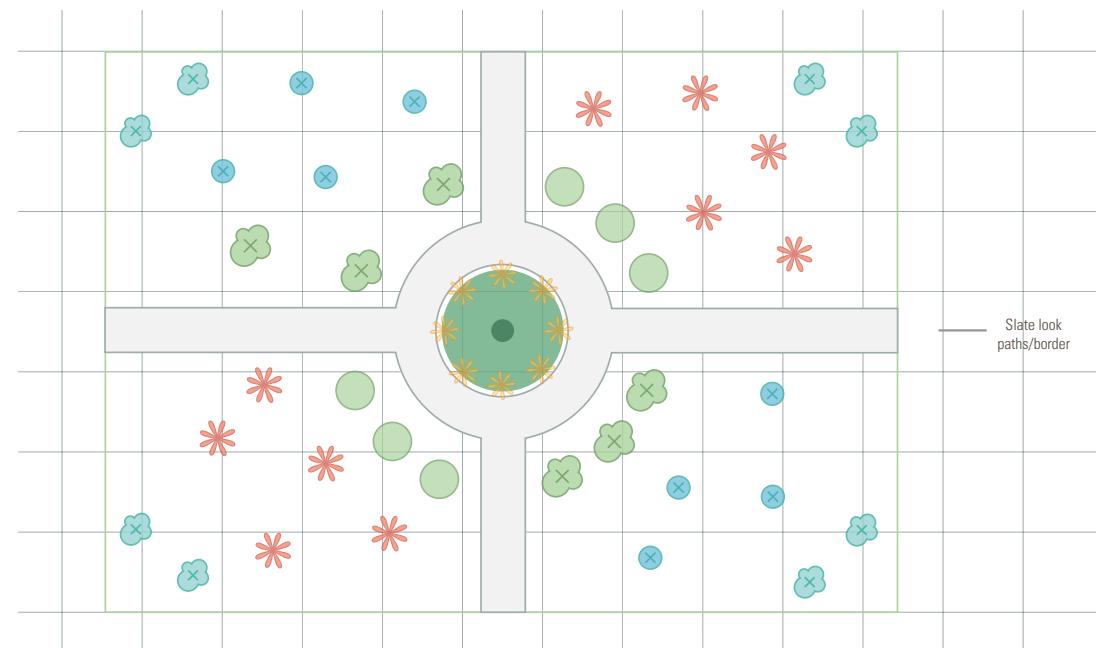
✿ Pineapple Sage,
Salvia elegans



✖ Thyme,
Thymus vulgaris



● Bay Tree 'Little Imp',
Laurus nobilis



3. Drought Tolerant

LIGHT: SUNNY ☀

MAINTENANCE: 🌊

WATERING: 💧

Alexandrina Council encourages our community to reduce water use, and what better way to do that than to design a fantastic drought tolerant garden. Not only will you reduce your impact on the environment, but you make gardening easy for yourself. Once established, a drought tolerant garden will need minimal care. There are a range of distinctive looking plants suitable for a drought tolerant garden.

PLANTS:



* Lomandra 'Blue Ridge'
or local Lomandra
'Woolly iron grass',
Lomandra leucocephala



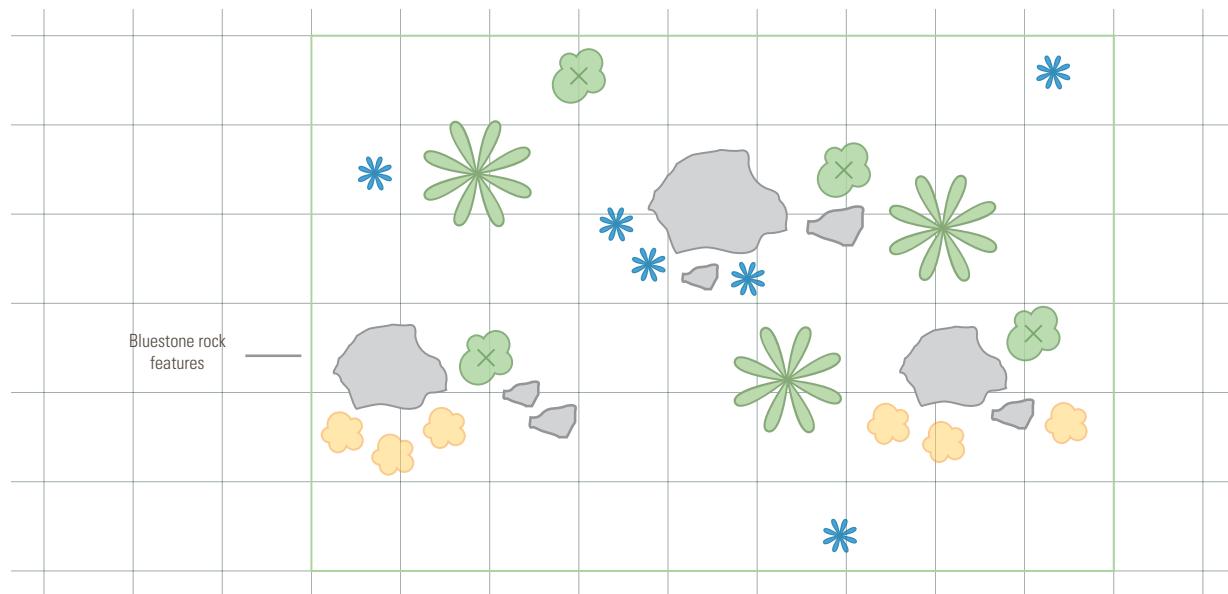
Grass Tree,
Xanthorrhoea quadrangulata



✗ Short-stem Flax-lily,
Dianella brevicaulis



Cloud Conostylis 'Lemon Lights',
Conostylis setigera



4. Flower Garden

LIGHT: SUNNY ☀

MAINTENANCE: 🌊⌊⌋⌊⌋

WATERING: ⚡⚡⚡

This cottage style garden suits a sunny verge. The plant selection is hardy, with many species flowering over many months. This garden will require a little more maintenance – spent flowers should be removed to encourage repeat flowering as required.

NOTE: The pathway could be made from stepping stones or wooden sleepers.

For advice on local native alternatives, visit one of the community nurseries listed on page 6.

PLANTS:



✖️ *Salvia* species



✖️ *Pelargonium* species



✳️ Native Bluebell,
Wahlenbergia spp.



✳️ Society Garlic,
Tulbaghia violacea



✳️ Blue Marguerite,
Felicia amelloides

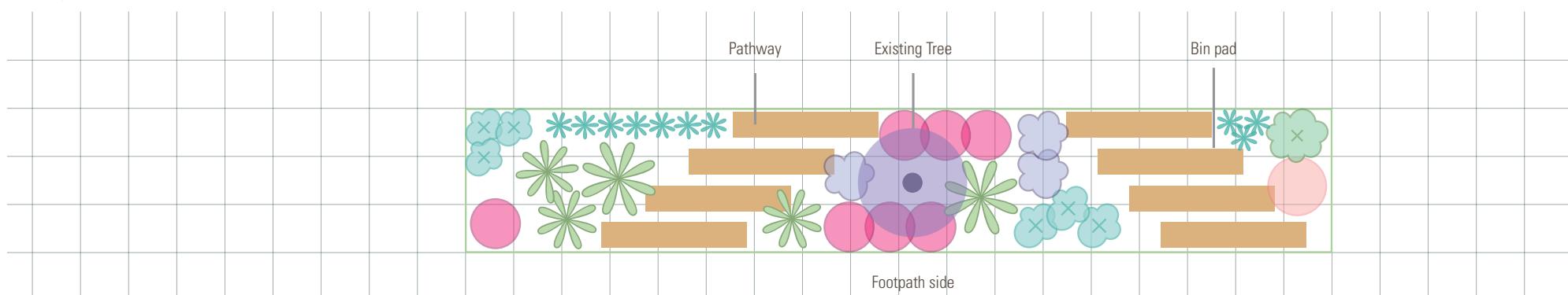


✖️ Snow-in-Summer,
Cerastium tomentosum



✖️ Butterfly Bush,
Gaura lindheimeri
(sterile cultivars only)

One square = 50cm



5. Butterfly & Bee

LIGHT: PART SUN ☀

MAINTENANCE: 🌟

WATERING: 💧

This design has a simple, natural planting layout.

Butterflies need food plants and shelter for their caterpillar stage, and food plants for the butterflies. Most of the suggested plants are local natives.

The local native plants in this design are available through community nurseries (see page 6 of this guide).

PLANTS:



✖ Creeping Boobialla,
Myoporum parvifolium



✖ Native Fuchsia,
Correa reflexa



✖ Smooth Riceflower,
Pimelea glauca



✖ Native Lilac,
Hardenbergia violacea



✖ Wallaby-grass,
Rytidosperma/
Austrodanthonia species



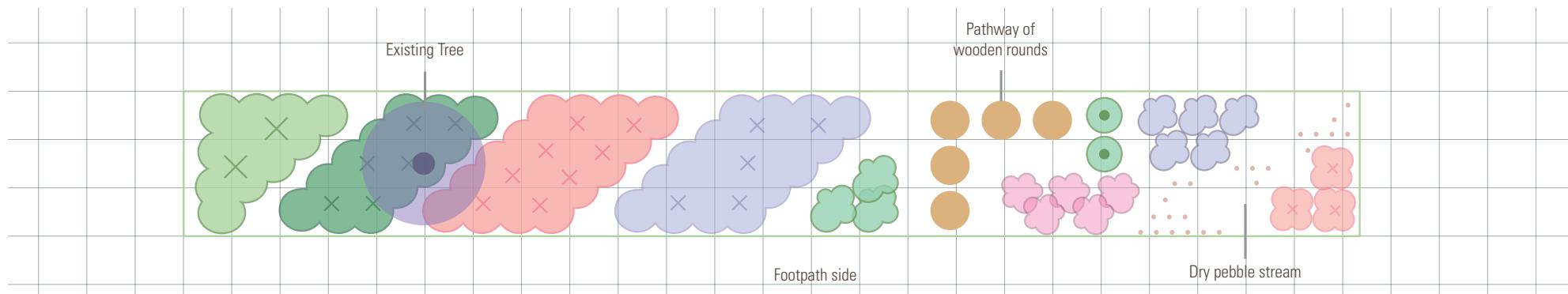
✖ Seaberry Saltbush,
Rhagodia candolleana
ssp. *candolleana*



✖ Common Everlasting,
Chrysocephalum
apiculatum



✖ Running Postman,
Kennedia prostrata



6. Local Coastal

LIGHT: DAPPLED ☀

MAINTENANCE: 🌟

WATERING: 💧

This design suits a relaxed coastal garden and can be laid out in an informal manner or in groupings for effect.

The Coastal Gardens Planting Guide produced by Natural Resources Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges is another great resource for choosing plants which won't be harmful to our local coastal landscapes.

You can have a garden that copes with our local climate without compromising on style by using resilient, local native coastal plants.

PLANTS:



✳️ Austral Trefoil,
Lotus australis



✖️ Muntries,
Kunzea pomifera



✿ Knobby Club-rush,
Ficinia nodosa

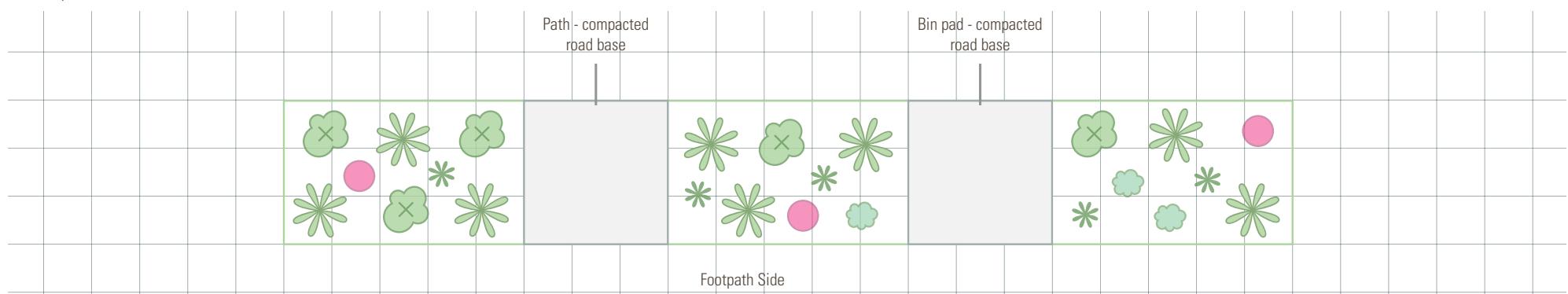


● Ruby salt-bush,
Enchylaena tomentosa



✳️ Austral Storks-bill,
Pelargonium australe

One square = 50cm





We hope you
found this planting
guide helpful.



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