



Unley Verges Planting Guide

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



Contents

About this Guide 3

Introduction 4

Guidelines for
Verge Landscaping 5

Design Tips 6

Garden Designs 8

Disclaimer: The information provided in this booklet is to be used as a guide. All information given is believed to be correct and provided through our experience and local knowledge in the City of Unley conditions, given in good faith without prejudice. We accept no responsibility for any loss, cost or damage resulting from following information provided in this guide.



About this Guide

This guide provides suggestions and ideas for residents to green their verges within the City of Unley.

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

Verges filled with dolomite are not water permeable. If these are replaced with loam and low plantings or lawn maintained by residents, it will help improve soil moisture, reflected heat and add to the cool, green feel of the City. Plants can also benefit the health of the street trees and support local wildlife like birds and butterflies.

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

To assist residents the City of Unley has developed six verge design examples. You can visit these display verges on Edmund Avenue, Unley starting at the corner with Rugby Terrace.

Thank you for helping to
make the City of Unley
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?

The City of Unley encourages residents to green their verge to enhance the aesthetic value of the streetscape as a whole and individual properties. The green nature of our suburbs is a key reason many people enjoy living and working in the area.

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. Collectively 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 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 Public Road form and tick the create nature strip box which is available online or at the Council office.

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 garden the verge by completing an Application to Alter a Public Road form available from the Council's website unley.sa.gov.au and tick create nature strip. If you are planning on installing irrigation to the verge, the pipework will need to go under the footpath so be sure to add this information to your application.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 spikey, 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. 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 in for the first year and once established will only need a top up drink in extreme weather. There are a range of non-native Mediterranean climate plants that are also water wise and low maintenance.

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. Alternatively websites like Plant Selector Plus by the Adelaide Botanic Gardens is a free database that allows you to search by postcode and plant attributes like height and flower colour.

The plant species should be available from any good garden centre, although some plants may be unavailable at certain times of the year.

Within the City of Unley are two garden centres:

- Mitre 10 Barrow and Bench
321 Unley Road, Malvern SA 5061
- The Conservatory
80 Unley Road, Unley SA 5061

Paths & bins

If you have regular visitors come by car, you may want to include some lawn or an unplanted area on the verge to enable passengers to get out of the vehicle without 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.

Irrigation is permitted, however the pipework will need to go under the footpath. This will be at residents expense, and approved via an Application to Alter a Public Road form.

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. 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 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 Public Road form so that Council can check if any works are scheduled in the foreseeable future.

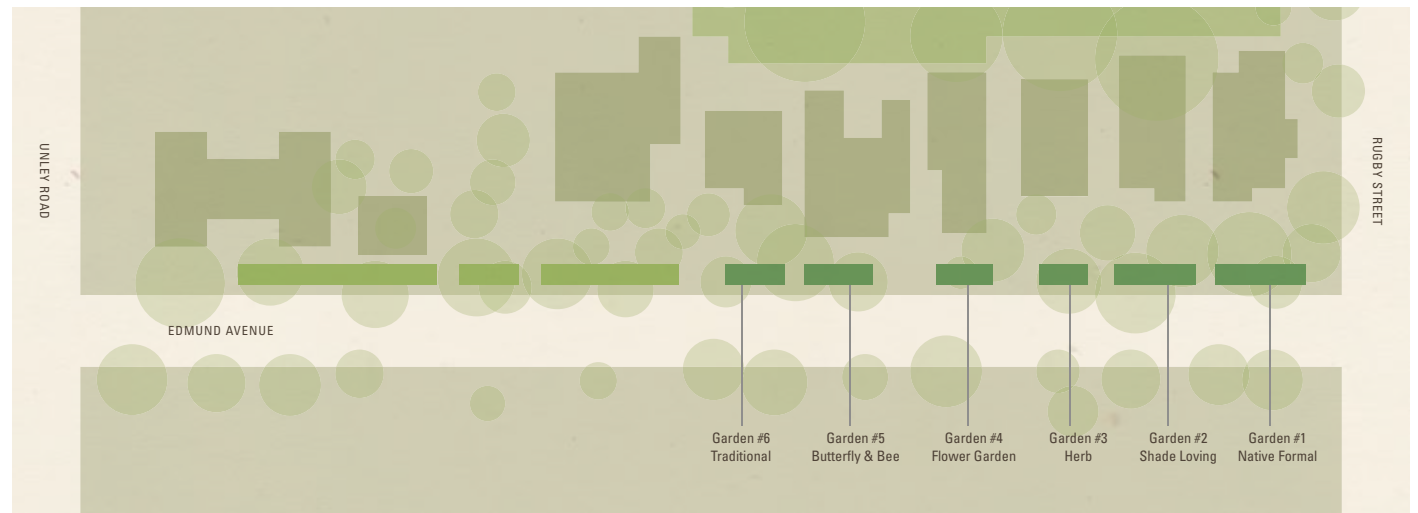
Garden Designs

The following six design ideas are examples that meet the guidelines which you can copy, adapt or use as inspiration for your own design. Species have been selected for their height, colour, form and hardiness although some will need to be clipped to ensure they are maintained below the 600mm height. A few have loose flower spikes which rise above the 600mm seasonally, but these shouldn't obstruct the view of road users.

Many of the 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.

As with anything natural there may be slight differences between the garden design plans in the booklet and the actual display street garden.



You can visit these garden designs on a verge display street at Edmund Avenue between Unley Road and Rugby Terrace.

1. Native Formal

LIGHT: DAPPLED 

MAINTENANCE: 
(IF CLIPPED TO HEDGE STYLE)

WATERING: 

Formal gardens are typically symmetrical with repeated patterns and often include hedges. You can achieve this look with native species. Some like Westringia and Lilly Pilly can be clipped and shaped. Native plants also have the added benefits of supporting local wildlife and generally being drought tolerant.

NOTE: No path has been included in this garden, since cars cannot park adjacent this verge. Telstra connection box must be left.

PLANTS:



 Lilly Pilly,
Syzygium smithii



 Native Rosemary,
Westringia fruticosa

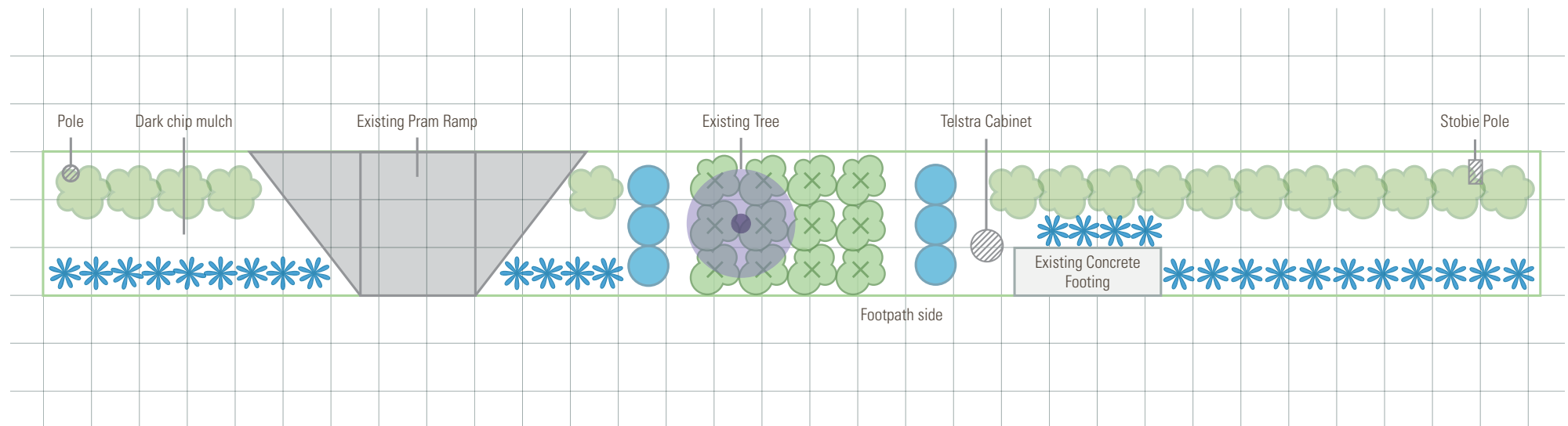


 Wattle Matt-rush,
Lomandra filiformis



 Flax Lilly,
Dianella tasmanica

One square = 50cm



2. Shade Loving

LIGHT: DAPPLED ☀️

MAINTENANCE: 🧰

WATERING: 💧

These plants are suited to a shady verge and use a modern contemporary planting layout with interesting form and colour. Due to the length it has two paths for car access along with a bin pad.

The paths are compacted quarry sand and its light colour helps make the garden feel larger and create contrast to the plants. Plant species are hardy and slow growing to reduce maintenance requirements.

The bin pad accommodates two residential bins but still has a mondo grass between. This may make manoeuvring the bins a little tricky, so consider if this will suit your own situation.

PLANTS:



✕ Rock Lily, *Arthropodium cirratum*



✕ Indian Hawthorn, *Raphiolepis indica*



✶ Orange Clivia, *Clivia miniata*



✶ Dwarf Mondo Grass, *Ophiopogon japonicus*



● Dwarf Abelia, *Abelia x Grandiflora*

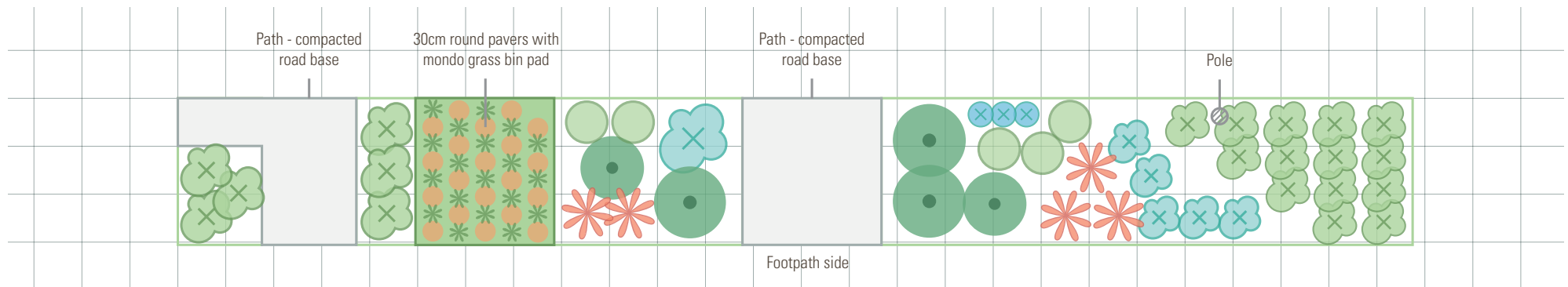


● Dwarf Nandina, *Nandina domestica*



✕ Purple Bugle, *Ajuga reptans*

One square = 50cm



3. Herb

LIGHT: DAPPLED/PART SUN ☀️ MAINTENANCE: 🧰 WATERING: 💧

Plant selection has focused on hardy, evergreen herbs which can grow in dappled light/part sun conditions. Residents with a full sun verge could select from a larger plant base.

The planting plan and plant palette compliments the style of the building and is simple and under-stated. It also reflects much of the style to be found in Unley gardens.

The bin pad accommodates 2 bins. The creeping Thyme between pavers will offer a level of scent and is able to withstand some foot traffic.

NOTE: This garden maximises access from parked vehicles with a path along the kerbside.

PLANTS:



* Creeping Thyme, *Thymus serpyllum*



✕ Rosemary, *Rosmarinus officinalis*

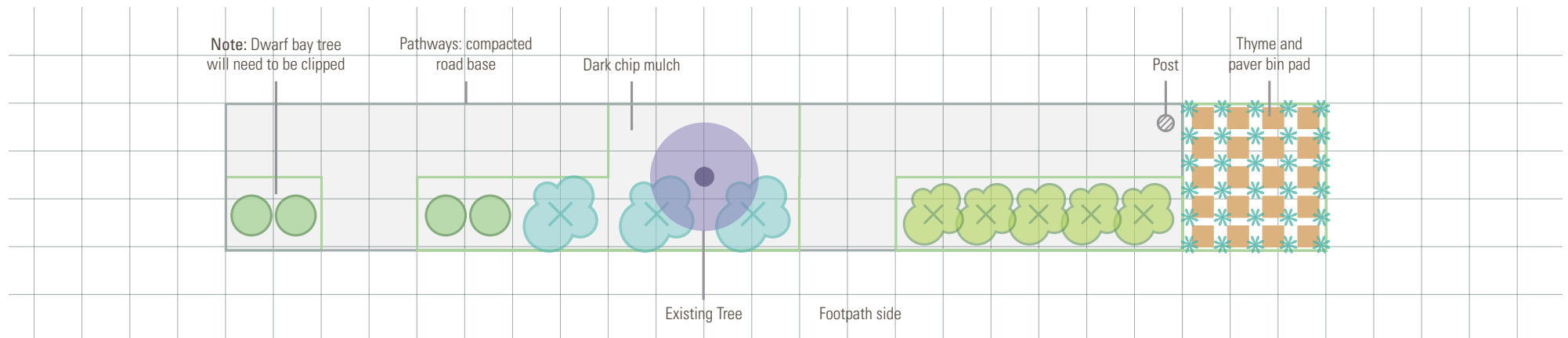


✕ Wormwood, *Artemisia arborescens*



● Dwarf Bay Tree, *Laurus nobilis*

One square = 50cm



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 and will need cutting back in late Autumn.

You could also under plant with seasonal bulbs for added winter colour.

NOTE: The stepping stone paths are recycled from old slate kerbing that used to be throughout Unley.

PLANTS:



Blue Salvia, *Salvia farinacea*



Geranium, *Pelargonium x hortorum*



Redhot Poker, *Kniphofia uvaria*



Society Garlic, *Tulbaghia violacea*



African Daisy, *Arctotis* hybrid 'Hannah'



Lambs Ears, *Stachys byzantina*

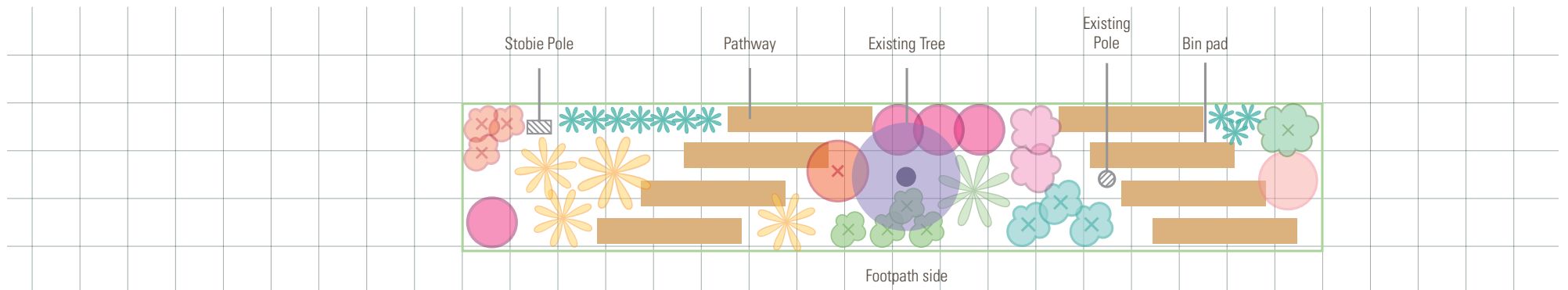


Silver Pigs Ear, *Cotyledon orbiculata*



Sedum, *Sedum spectabile*

One square = 50cm





✘ Daisybush, *Osteospermum*
cultivar 'Elite Orange'



✱ Australia Foxtail Grass,
Pennisetum alopecuroides



● Dill Daisy,
Argyranthemum cultivar
'Elite Raspberry'



5. Butterfly & Bee

LIGHT: PART SUN ☀

MAINTENANCE: 🧰

WATERING: 💧

The existing front garden has a native garden so the verge garden matches this 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 native, but others like Sedum and Silver Carpet are not. Don't be afraid to mix and match local and introduced species in urban areas if they suit your gardening aims and personal taste.

If you are passionate about local provenance plants, there are many native species available through State Flora or Trees for Life.

PLANTS:



Creeping Boobialla, *Myoporum parvifolium*



Leatherleaf Sedge, *Carex buchananii*



Pink Rice Flower, *Pimelea ferruginea*



Native Lilac, *Hardenbergia violacea*



Mat Rush, *Lomandra longifolia*



Sedum, *Sedum spectabile*

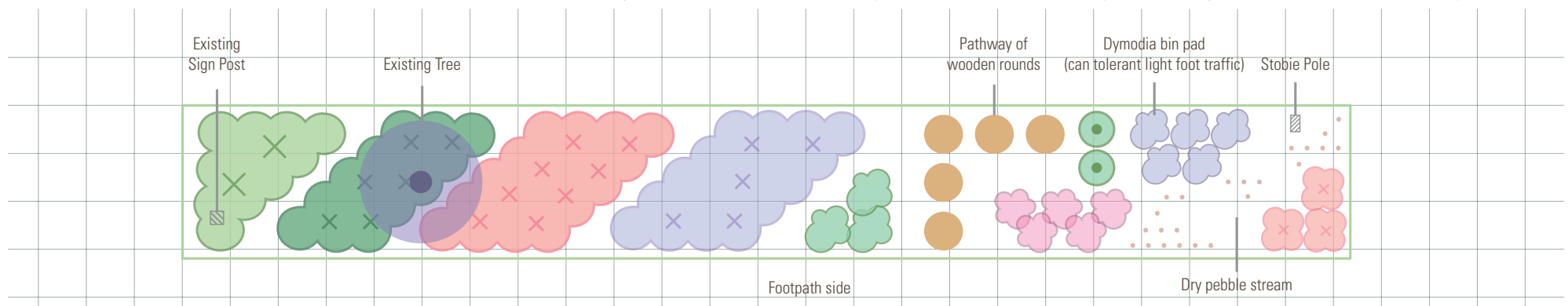


Silver Carpet, *Dymondia margaretae*



Running Postman, *Kennedia prostrata*

One square = 50cm





6. Traditional

LIGHT: DAPPLED ☀️

MAINTENANCE: 🧰

WATERING: 💧

This design would suit a very small verge garden with reasonable shade. For simplicity it has been mass-planted with white Agapanthus.

Agapanthus are a common plant used by residents in Unley. They flower late spring and summer and look good in mass plantings. Please note that they are a problem weed in bush and farmland. Native alternatives include Dianella and Lomandra (see Garden 1: Native Formal).

The Agapanthus could also be substituted with Arthropodium, which flower in a part sun aspect. Or for a more contemporary look, Aeonium (succulent) does not flower but has an excellent leaf texture.

PLANTS:

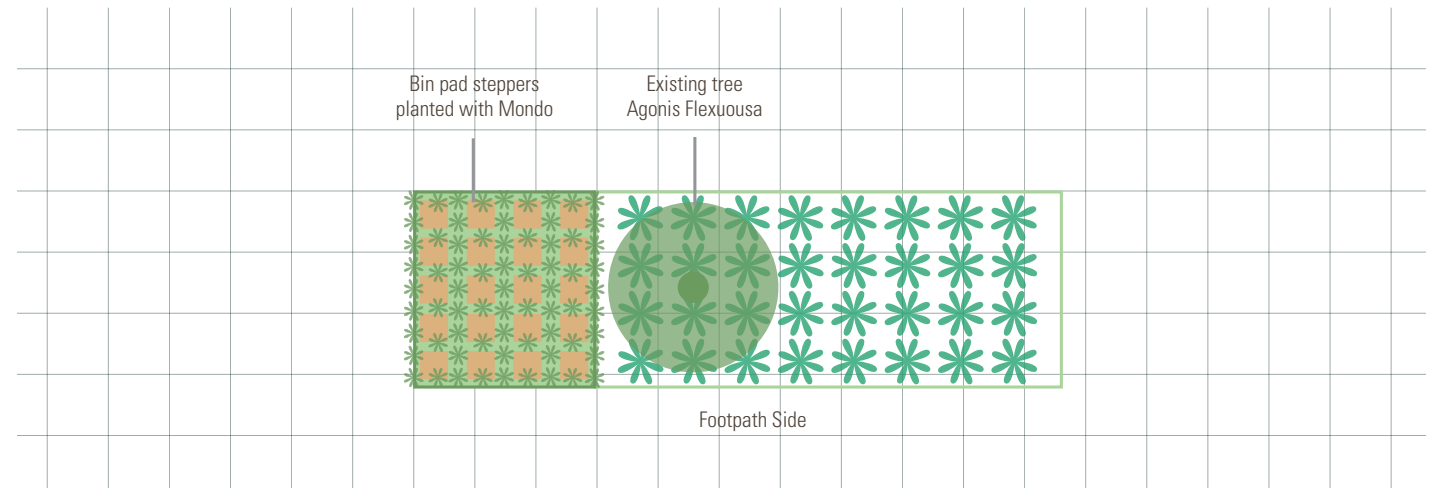


* Dwarf White Agapanthus, *Agapanthus hybrid* Snowball



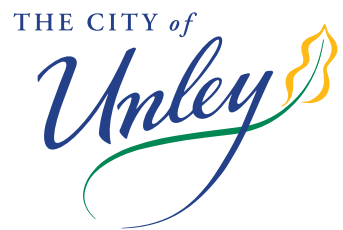
* Dwarf Mondo Grass, *Ophiopogon japonicus*

One square = 50cm





We hope you
found this planting
guide helpful.



(08) 8372 5111
pobox1@unley.sa.gov.au
Unley Civic Centre
181 Unley Road, Unley SA 5061

unley.sa.gov.au

© City of Unley 2017

