



Using your nature strip to grow food plants

Why use the nature strip?

The nature strip or verge at the front of our houses is a much under-utilised area. Often it has a good sunny aspect and is well-drained, and can be planted to make a productive and attractive garden.

Plan your planting carefully

Consider the mature height and shape of the tree/s you would like to grow. Check that the width of the strip between the footpath and road, and the height of overhead power lines, is adequate. Remember that your tree and garden must not block the vision of passing traffic or when you are reversing out of the driveway. Allow clearance for opening doors of parked cars. Check for telephone and electricity service cables, and gas, water and stormwater pipes before digging holes!

Some varieties to plant

Dwarf fruit-trees that only grow one-and-a-half to two metres tall are well suited to smaller spaces. Citrus varieties such as lemons, limes, oranges, mandarins, grapefruit or tangelos are good. It is possible to get several types grafted on the one tree. Healthy citrus trees look good and have beautiful perfume when in flower.

Other fruit-trees you could plant include: olives, crab-apples, persimmons, cherry guava, strawberry guava or fejoas. . Some more unusual varieties could include; ice-cream bean and if space permits, oaks and black walnuts. In Sydney, it's best to avoid trees that get fruit fly such as peaches and plums.



Under-plant the fruit trees with herbs and flowers. These will spread and cover the soil and benefit the trees by attracting beneficial insects to pollinate flowers. Strongly scented herbs such as lavender, lemongrass, rosemary and geraniums will help repel pests. Dog-bane will help repel dogs. Spring flowering bulbs can be scattered throughout the bed.

Building your garden

Buy healthy young trees that will establish quickly after planting. Plant them in autumn after the heat of summer has passed. Prepare a hole and mix the soil with some mature compost, cow manure and a handful of dolomite. Position the tree so it is slightly raised above the surrounding soil. This will prevent roots becoming waterlogged. Water the newly planted tree with a seaweed extract or liquid from your worm farm to encourage new roots to grow. Protect the young tree with a fence made of a few stakes until it is large enough to be safe from dogs, garbage trucks and mowers.

Get the neighbours to join in

Encourage your neighbours to plant fruit trees too and create an orchard in your street with enough fruit for everyone to share.