

Urban Forest Policy & Guidelines

Definition

The Urban Forest is defined as the totality of trees and shrubs on all public and private land in and around urban areas (including bushland, parkland, gardens and street trees) and is measured as a canopy cover percentage of the total area. The Urban Forest is recognised as a primary component to the urban ecosystem.

Purpose

Blacktown City has produced this document to set the policy direction and provide guidelines for the planting, and maintenance of trees.

It states our policy and provides guidelines for persons dealing with trees and shrubs found on our streets, parks and on private property

What this document is for and how it applies

This document has been written for Council staff, members of the public, developers and service authorities dealing with trees in the City.

This strategic document will facilitate greater collaboration with the community as well as support and inform our staff in the planting and management of trees on Council and public land. Additionally, the accompanying guidelines provide information for community members interested in understanding our methodology in the management of the Urban Forest.

Urban Forest Policy

Blacktown City recognises that trees and shrubs are vital to the urban landscape. They provide benefits and improvements to the urban aesthetics, environment, biodiversity, climate, economy, and social wellbeing of the community.

Council will:

- Optimise the Urban Forest within the constraints of the modern urban landscape – infrastructure requirements, health and safety considerations and development issues.
- Provide methods, designs and techniques that will minimise conflicts between trees and the built environment.
- Involve members of the community in the selection, planting and protection of our urban forest through programs of education, promotion and consultation.
- Develop park and streetscape designs and strategies suited to our City
- Implement a priority based program for the planting and replacement of trees.

Our policy objectives and actions

The following actions will be undertaken to achieve the Urban Forest Policy goals and objectives. These will be developed and implemented by Civil and Park Maintenance and the results of these actions will be reported to Council on a regular basis.

Objectives	Actions
1. Improve the health, and increase the extent, of the tree canopy cover to provide environmental and social benefits to the City	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertake and complete an inventory of trees based on asset management principles. This inventory will list the location, condition and the positive and negative impacts of our existing tree population in Blacktown City.• Analyse the data collected by the tree inventory and develop a hierarchy of streets that have declining streetscape amenity and program these for replacement and infill planting.• Develop long term strategies to increase the quantity and quality of Council's tree population in both the streets and parks.• Sequentially remove certain species of trees in streets and parks that have a high risk of failure or trees which have environmental issues and replace these with more suitable species.• Develop a replacement program that will take into account site conditions, community feedback and tree suitability.• Stage plantings of trees within parks so that a healthy canopy of older trees is maintained and younger replacement trees are always growing to fill gaps left by trees that are old diseased or need to be removed.• Continue to invest in the health of the urban forest by avoiding tree monocultures and planting a variety of non-invasive native and exotic species that suit their location.• Ensure that the trees within private land are protected through implementation of appropriate controls
2. Improve wildlife habitat and biodiversity by providing trees and vegetation in our streets, parks and private gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Carry out a survey of existing native animals and investigate which native animals and plants can be attracted and sustained in Blacktown City.• Ensure that plantings attract wildlife back into the City by maximising shelter, feeding and breeding opportunities.• Encourage the use of plant communities native to the City that provide native biodiversity and wildlife habitat (particularly for resident and migratory birds and other native fauna).• Work towards a long term goal that native vegetation within our open spaces is weed free, self-sustaining and provides habitat for wildlife known to occur in the area and attract other species back into the area.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide and promote our reference list to guide native plantings suitable for the City which is a summary of current knowledge within the Council and our local Bushcare community. • Develop protection measures for our local ecosystems including remaining areas of native vegetation and revegetation areas in accordance with our adopted Biodiversity Strategy.
4. Create wildlife corridors by improving the connectedness of habitat fragments across the City.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to identify and achieve linkages between current habitat islands wherever possible within the parks and streetscape and other corridors provided by rail and riparian corridors
5. Enable the community to value, nurture and protect trees, vegetation and wildlife in their gardens, streets and public spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce community education material outlining the benefits of trees and providing a list of suitable species they can plant which will not cause any long term negative impacts to their property while still promoting biodiversity. • Expand the support given to Bushcare volunteers in their worthwhile work undertaken to provide native vegetation and wildlife habitat in our City parks and open space. • Work with the community to reduce the impact of pest species and pets on biodiversity occurring in the area.
6. Provide trees that are appropriate to their location and that beautify and enhance the streetscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop streetscape planting designs that take into account site constraints and tailor them to those conditions. • Keep up to date with new technologies and best practice to assist in resolving tree maintenance and management issues. • Develop appropriate species lists and standards for sustainable tree planting and maintenance methods for use by our staff, contractors, private developers and the community to ensure that current problems are reduced. • Look for opportunities to provide improved streetscapes across a range of issues such as pedestrian and vehicular access, cycle routes, stormwater management and biodiversity corridors through improved management of data and networking internally.
7. Ensure the community is aware of and educated about trees and vegetation and involve them in decision making about these issues in their area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing appropriate resources, advice and education material in a number of accessible formats such as via our website, to communicate our policies and procedures in relation to the management of our Urban Forest. • Develop a process to ensure that community views on tree and vegetation management are considered in the decision making process.
8. Deliver effective and sustainable tree management programs at acceptable costs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out tree management in the City within a risk management framework. • Develop budget costing as part of the yearly management plan process by providing details of the

budget required to meet the goals and objectives of the Urban Forest Policy.

- Continue to collect and update urban forest inventory data regarding our current tree population and vegetation to better manage these assets.
 - Ensure that tree health is maximised by providing training to staff on appropriate management techniques as detailed in the Urban Forest Strategy.
 - Continue to add to the significant trees and vegetation register and develop a management plan to maximise their health and longevity.
 - Develop performance indicators which enable us to monitor progress towards our goals and aims.
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Relationship to local and state government controls

The Urban Forest Policy and guidelines relate to and are guided by the following legislation, Council planning instruments and associated documents and strategies

Policy/document	Name	Status
LEGISLATION		
Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979		Current
Local Government Act 1993		Current
Roads Act 1993		Current
Electricity Supply Act 1995		Current
Sydney Water Act 1994		Current
Heritage Act 1977		Current
Crimes Act 1900		Current
10/50 Vegetation Clearing 2014		Current
Trees (Disputes between Neighbours Act) 2006		Current
Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995		Current
FORMAL PLANNING INSTRUMENTS		
LEP 2015	Blacktown City Local Environment Plan 2015	Current
DCP 2015	Development Control Plan 2015	Current
DCP	Blacktown City Council Growth Centre Precincts Development Control Plan 2010	Current
SEPP	Infrastructure 2007	Current
SEPP	Sydney Region Growth Centres 2006	Current
SEPP	Exempt and Complying Development Codes 2008	
BLACKTOWN CITY COUNCIL POLICIES		
P000508.2	Vegetated Road Verge & Nature Strip Maintenance Approval Policy	Current
P000514	Open Space Lighting Policy	Current
P000156.3	Street Lighting	Current
P000485.2	Path Paving Policy	Current
P000251.1	Tree Planting Standard	To be deleted
P000481.1	Street Tree Planting	Current
P000347.4	Enforcement of Tree Preservation	Current
P000349.3	Register of Significant Vegetation	Current
P000350.3	Tree Planting in Streets	Current
P000351.3	Trees for Schools, Churches and Community Groups	Current
P000352.3	Provision of Free Trees to Residents	Current
P000353	Civil Infrastructure Works - Landscaping	Current
P000354.4	Tree Preservation Order - Witnesses Expenses	Current
P000482.1	Environmental Sustainability Policy	Current
ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS AND STRATEGIES		
BCC	Register of Significant Trees and Vegetation	Current

BCC	Landscape Works Guidelines	Draft
BCC	BCC Street Tree Planting Guidelines 2008	To be Superseded
BCC	Biodiversity Strategy	Current
BCC	Landscape Strategy	To be Superseded
WorkCover	Amenity Tree Industry Code of Practice 1998	Current
APPLICABLE AUSTRALIAN STANDARDS		
AS4373	Pruning of Amenity Trees	Current
AS4970	Protection of Trees on Development Sites	Current
AS2303	Tree Stock for Landscape Use	Current