



Planting Near Sewers, Drains and Water Mains Guide

February 2019

Key points

Inappropriate planting near Melbourne Water assets can:

- Damage buildings and block pipes
- Increase flood levels
- Cause critical water supply failures
- Damage levee banks
- Block maintenance and emergency access

Melbourne Water seeks to balance asset protection and maintenance with the natural environment, aesthetics and biodiversity.

Melbourne Water has classified vegetation types into four categories reflecting their suitability for planting near Melbourne Water assets.

About this guide

This guide provides general information for utility installations only. The information contained herein does not constitute consent, nor does it preclude the need to obtain relevant approvals under other legislations, such as under the Special Building Overlay or Land Subject to Inundation Overlay.

Melbourne Water consent is required before any excavation or installation occurs.

Quick Tip



For information on underground assets, please call **Dial Before You Dig on 1100**

Melbourne Water's critical infrastructure, such as water supply, sewerage and drainage structures, can be damaged by inappropriate planting.

Trees and shrubs are an important part of the urban and rural environment. They contribute to local amenity, urban cooling, increased biodiversity, habitat, air and water quality and soil stability. Unfortunately, trees and shrubs are not always compatible with critical infrastructure such as buildings or underground services such as sewers, drains or water supply pipes.

Drains, sewers and water mains can become blocked and damaged by tree roots, disrupting services to the community and involving costly repairs. Vegetation can block access to critical maintenance points, such as maintenance holes and vent pipes. Inappropriate landscaping along drains or floodways can obstruct flow resulting in increased flood levels. Trees can also weaken levee banks and dam walls, potentially causing the bank to leak or collapse.

Melbourne Water has produced this guide to assist in choosing the appropriate planting location for trees, shrubs and grasses to help reduce potential damage and flood risk.

Where does this guide apply?

This guide gives advice on the types of planting which may be appropriate near underground pipes (such as drains, water mains or sewers), floodways, flood plains, retarding basins and levee banks. Please note that not all structure types have been listed.

If property owners are considering to plant any tree or shrub species within their property, consent is required within an easement or within 5 meters of an asset (from the outside edge of asset) or 20 meters from a waterway (from the top of bank) whether Melbourne Water's asset is within or outside their property.

Diagram 1: Floodway within overland flow path

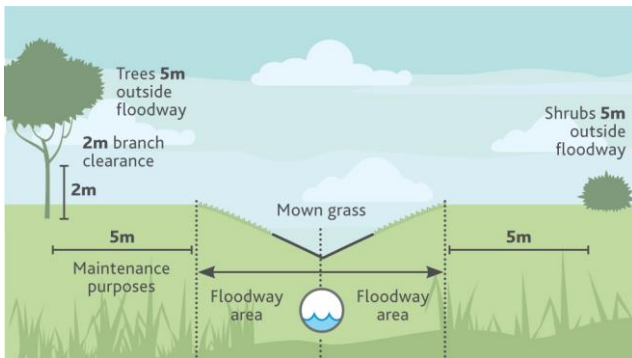


Diagram 2: Underground pipes, manholes or vent stacks

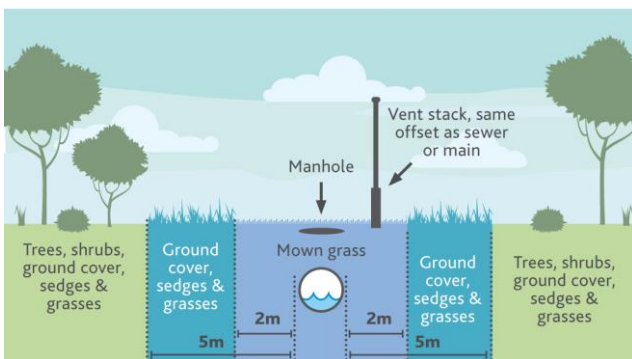
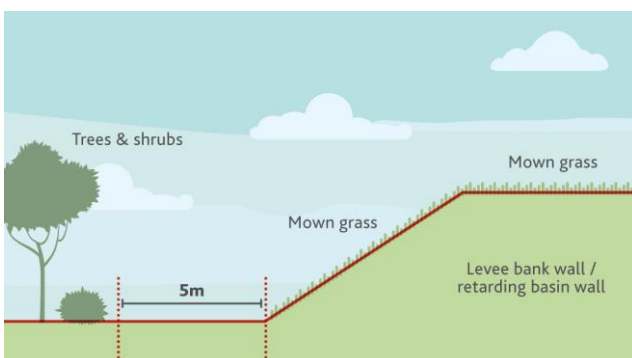


Diagram 3: Levee bank



Vegetation types

Diagrams 1 to 3 show minimum offset distances for each vegetation type:

- Mown Grass: up to 30cm in height
- Ground cover/Sedges: up to 1.5m in height
- Shrubs: 1.5m–4m high
- Trees: 4m and above

The form of vegetation is generally indicative of its root system, however, some species may have particularly vigorous root systems. When choosing an appropriate species it is important to consider the typical growth habits of the species and its suitability to the site. For more information regarding suitable species please contact your local Council or nursery.

Additional protection: Root Barriers

In addition to the required offset distances, Melbourne Water recommends the use of root barriers. When correctly installed root barriers can help prevent or limit the impact of tree roots on surrounding infrastructure by reducing root growth beyond the barrier or diverting root growth away from the barrier.

Please contact your local nursery for product and installation advice.

Other Approvals

This information is not permission and does not preclude the need to obtain other relevant consent and compliance with other legislations, e.g. Special Building Overlay or Land Subject to Inundation Overlay.

Who do I contact?

Please contact Melbourne Water – Asset Services for further information regarding planting and landscaping structure requirements, build-over agreements and conditions.

Applications can be completed online at our website www.melbournewater.com.au

Email: asset.services@melbournewater.com.au

Website: www.melbournewater.com.au

General Melbourne Water Enquiries 131 722

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