



Native Vegetation

Trees, shrubs, herbs and grasses

What is meant by the term native vegetation?

Native vegetation is not just trees but includes all native shrubs, herbs, climbers, flowers and grasses. Native vegetation is important in our landscape to assist with maintaining ecological and landscape processes as well as providing amenity value.

Landholders often “clean up” their property out of concern about fire or snakes but do not realise that “cleaning up” by felling trees, removing shrubs, mowing, burning or spraying may be illegal and they may be having a detrimental impact on the habitat and amenity value of their property.

If you are unsure about whether the vegetation on your property is native or not, contact Council for advice.

Management of native vegetation in Victoria

The Victorian State Government *Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation* applies three principles:

- Avoid the vegetation removal
- Minimise the vegetation removal
- Offset the removal to compensate for the loss.

With up to 66% of Victoria’s native vegetation having been cleared, this approach aims to result in no further loss of native vegetation across Victoria.

Do I need a Planning Permit to remove vegetation on my property?

Yes. Under Clause 52.17 of the Golden Plains Planning Scheme, a permit is required to remove, destroy or lop

native vegetation on your property. The terms remove, destroy or lop include mowing, slashing, spraying with herbicide, pruning, digging out, raking, burning or the removal of timber.

Clause 52.17 of the Planning Scheme contains a list of exemptions. Check with Council to determine if your proposed works are exempt from the provisions.

Do I need a Council Planning Permit to remove native vegetation for fire protection?

Many landowners remove trees believing they are a fire hazard. Research shows that it is the fine fuels (sticks, twigs, bark and shrubs) under the trees which are the main threat during a fire.

Under the 10/50 rule, landowners can remove native trees within 10 metres of a dwelling and all fine fuels within 50 metres without the need for a Planning Permit. This does not include roadsides or vegetation under special protection. *If you are in any doubt about the works you are planning to do, contact Council's Planning Department for advice.*

The CFA and Council have some excellent information to assist you in planning for wildfire on your property while retaining your native vegetation. Check out their website at www.cfa.vic.gov.au.

Can I clear native vegetation to build or maintain my fence?

You may clear native vegetation to the minimum extent necessary to build your boundary fence. Council consent must be sought prior to removing vegetation on the road reserve outside your property. The maximum total width of clearing permitted for your fence is 4 metres although clearance less than this is preferred.

Clearing native vegetation to construct internal fences on your property requires a Planning Permit. *Check with Council before undertaking any works.*

Can I clean up the native vegetation along my roadside?

Native vegetation on a roadside is protected. *Check with Council before undertaking any works.*

Can I remove or lop native vegetation that is a safety risk?

Vegetation that is an *immediate* risk of personal injury or damage to property can be removed without a permit. By immediate, it is inferred that the tree or limb is in imminent danger of falling and is a direct threat to personal safety. In some situations a professional arborists report may be required. *Check with Council before undertaking any works.*

Can I remove dead vegetation?

A Planning Permit is required to remove large standing dead trees with a trunk diameter greater than 40cm. Large dead trees and tree hollows provide important habitat. The removal of other dead vegetation does not require a permit unless the land is subject to a Planning Scheme Overlay (e.g. Environmental Significance Overlay). *It pays to check with Council first.*

Landholders are encouraged to retain some dead and fallen material within existing native vegetation as this provides valuable habitat for wildlife.

Can I collect firewood from my property?

Collection of a *reasonable* amount of firewood for *personal* use permitted provided the work does not contravene other protections (i.e. dead standing timber with a trunk diameter greater than 40cm) and your land is over 10 hectares. Timber planted for the purposes of a shelter belt or woodlot can be removed without a permit.

Collection of firewood from some forest reserves is managed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning who can be contacted on 136 186.

Can I graze my goat, horse or other stock on the native vegetation on my property?

Grazing of stock or household animals on native vegetation can have a detrimental effect on native plants and shrubs. Landholders are encouraged to minimise the grazing of native vegetation by stock particularly during times of seed set.