



Residents ready to plant a seed

Hume residents are being told not to plant lettuces and beetroot on nature strips, just yet.

But the practice could become more widespread if a growing number of gardeners get their way.

Coolaroo's Abrar Dham is leading a petition that urges the council to allow and encourage nature strip veggie gardens.

Hume residents are already allowed to landscape nature strips under certain conditions, with permission granted by the council on a case by case basis.

But Ms Dham said greater housing density and changing environmental conditions meant the pressure to produce food in urban settings was going to increase.

"The main thing is, it's good for the environment. But for a lot of people on small

blocks, they don't have the backyard for this type of thing."

Ms Dham said nature strip gardens could also play a role in creating friendlier neighbourhoods.

"There's people living near me who have been in the area for 40 years, and I don't know most of them," she said.

"Since I've been preparing the nature strip in front of my house, they've been coming up to me ... it's a good thing."

Ms Dham said nature strip vegetable gardens would also promote healthy eating.

"We know the statistics. This would be a simple way to encourage people to seek out the right food."

The petition, which is supported by Sunbury Community Health, has already attracted

more than 270 signatures. It acknowledges that commonsense guidelines should apply – that gardens must be safe, must not obstruct foot or vehicle traffic, must allow for the opening of car doors and must receive regular care.

Council's acting city infrastructure director David Fricke acknowledged that some residents have limited space but said people with access to private or community gardens should grow vegetables there.

"This is safer than growing vegetables on nature strips," Mr Fricke said.

A review of the council's nature strip gardening policy is expected to be completed by spring.

To sign the petition, visit goo.gl/N8xWrc.

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