

Living Streets Aotearoa Position Statement on berm gardens and other plantings besides footpaths

Living Streets recognises the benefits that come from having plants in our urban spaces, including near paths where people walk. These include:-

- buffering from traffic on the roadway
- greater visual appeal and amenity
- air cleansing
- absorption of water
- cooling (can also be adverse at some times of year)
- shading (can also be adverse at some times of year)
- moderation of vehicle speeds through creating a sense of road narrowing.

However, plantings can also have adverse effects on pedestrians. These include: -

- slipping
- tripping
- injury to eyes or other parts of body
- reduction in usable footpath width
- foliage obscuring street lights, reducing visibility at dusk and night time
- reduced physical safety and feelings of safety, especially for people walking alone, due to poor lines of sight
- decreased ability for pedestrians and drivers to see each other.

Our position is that plantings beside footpaths in urban settings should be done to minimise the adverse effects while achieving the benefits as much as possible.

We support plantings near footpaths being done in ways consistent with CPTED principles. In particular, they should:-

- be appropriate for the space in terms of height and width, so generally not having a foliage between 0.5 and 2m above ground level
- not be so dense as to limit visibility for pedestrians or of pedestrians for other road users
- not overhang the path between ground level and 2.5m above ground level
- not obscure any street lighting especially where it limits pedestrians' ability to see the surface of the footpaths or makes the route along the footpath or the adjacent area dark
- not have leaves or other parts that, when still attached to the plant, are likely to cause injury to people using the footpath.

Position adopted 25/6/2025