

# NATURE STRIP REVEGETATION

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## A Personal Regeneration Project

As a landscape architect at Architectus, and with experience at the University of Melbourne's Urban Ecology and Design Lab, I've had the privilege of working on projects from the local to the global scale—including a live exhibit of a red-listed bush-cricket at the Venice Architecture Biennale. I've also been fortunate to work alongside the dedicated volunteer networks in Boroondara—groups like Back2Nettleton, KooyongKoot Alliance, and the Urban Guerillas. I've led monthly working bees at the Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve in Elsternwick and have experience in plant propagation and nursery work.

Despite all this, one thing continued to bother me: my own family's nature strip. Located in Glen Iris, under the canopy of an oak, the conditions were poor even for the ever-present kikuyu. The narrow bed was filled with the tangled root mass and the soil was compacted.



## Outcomes and Reflections

The result has been encouraging. The grasses are beginning to naturally spread, shading the soil and reducing the opportunity for weeds to take hold. In turn, this creates microclimates where low-growing groundcovers can flourish. It's a slow evolution, but one that feels deeply aligned with the principles of ecological restoration and urban biodiversity.



The challenge of revegetating this nature strip was not straightforward. Reactivating a healthy soil ecology was a slow, delicate process, especially under the thirsty, established oak. I approached the regeneration gradually and staged. **Here's what I learned:**

### 1. Weed Control and Site Preparation

The first task was removing the kikuyu, which I dug up in sections like a carpet, ensuring that no root fragments remained which can resprout.

### 2. Soil Improvement

After clearing the site, I imported fresh topsoil—specifically a low-nutrient, native blend with no added fertilizers. This helps give native plants a competitive edge over weeds.

### 3. Plant Selection

I went to my local community nursery and selected a variety of hardy endemic grasses and forbs. I also selected them on their ability to reproduce and spread through self-seeding runners.

When it comes to the use of weed mats, I would recommend using a biodegradable geotextile during the early stages. It suppresses weeds, helps retain moisture, and slowly breaks down as plants establish. Alternatively if you leave the soil bare and plant self-seeding native grasses like *Poa* and *Microlaena* you can let the plants fill spaces over time. I chose this approach due to the difficult conditions on my naturestrip.

