

VERGE MAINTENANCE

KCC looks after trees, hedges, shrubs, flowers and grass verges. It also deals with weeds on roads and pavements.

There is a maintenance plan that is carried out throughout the year to look after these. If you spot a problem you can report it online via

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem>

Trees, hedges and shrubs on private land, including land that is next to roads and pavements is **NOT** looked after by KCC. These will be owned by private landowners, district councils, parish councils, housing associations and homeowners. **It is the landowner's responsibility to look after these areas.** If a problem regarding vegetation on private land is reported to KCC then they will take action to rectify the problem by writing to the landowner:

- The first letter is written to the landowner who is given 28 days to complete the vegetation works.
- If nothing is done within this time frame, the owner will receive an official notice serving a further 28 days to complete the works
- Again if the works are not completed within this time, KCC will do the necessary works and bill the landowner accordingly with legal action taken if payment for the works is not received.

MAINTENANCE PLANS

GRASS

<i>Location of grass</i>	<i>What we cut and When we cut</i>
Rural grass	We cut a 900mm (3 foot) strip next to the road edge using a tractor mounted mower. A cut between May and September to maintain highway safety.
Urban grass	Grass located next to roads or footpaths, normally within the town or village centre and 30 mph limit. Cut between March and October (about once every 5 weeks) to maintain highway safety. In urban grass areas, we wait until 6 weeks after the flowering period before cutting spring flowers, such as daffodils, so they will grow the following year.
Visibility areas	Grass that is adjacent to a road junction and is within the sight line for drivers turning in or out. Cut between April and October (about every 2 months) to maintain highway safety.

In Kent there are roadside nature reserves to encourage wildlife and plants. These nature reserves are managed in line with the Kent Wildlife Trust guidelines and may have different cutting programmes.

How to help

If you would like to cut the grass more often than we can, this is OK.

Grass cuttings can be left evenly spread over the mown verge or disposed of with your lawn cuttings. Please do not pile them on the verge or leave them where they can block drains or ditches.

FLOWERS

We look after flowers on verges. In urban grass areas we wait until 6 weeks after the flowering period before cutting spring flowers, such as daffodils, so they will grow the following year. These are cut in our planned grass schedule.

How to help

If you would like to plant bulbs such as daffodils and crocus in verges, please contact us beforehand. By telling us, we can try and make sure the verges aren't cut until after the flowering period and they will grow again the following year.

WEEDS

We spray weeds on roads and pavements once a year between mid-May and end of July. The timing depends on weather conditions.

It takes 2 to 4 weeks to spray roads in one district. Some roads will be treated after others and could have more weed growth by the time they are sprayed.

What we use

The chemical we use is Glyphosate. It is the most commonly used weed killer and is marketed as safe to its users and the public. It is suitable for use on and around roads.

We use specialist treatment methods for harmful weeds, such as ragwort, giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam.

We do not treat other weeds such as dandelions which grow in grass verges.

How to help

Pulling or hoeing young weeds would save us using weedkiller. It is best to wear gloves when touching any plant you are unfamiliar with in case you have a reaction to the sap or prickles.

The weedkiller we use may remain in the plant system for 6 weeks or more so you should not put sprayed weeds into your compost or into your green waste collection.

TREES

We need to look after trees to make sure they are safe.

Trees are inspected by professionals, who cultivate, manage and make decisions about them. When inspecting a tree we look for things like:

- disease
- weakness or damage to the tree structure
- if it affects the width and height clearance required for the road.

We do not sort out problems caused by trees, such as:

- falling leaves, seeds and sap
- light and shading
- branches hanging over your garden

- interference with television reception, telephones and solar panels.

Removal

We try to keep as many trees as possible and cutting down a tree is the very last option. To help decide if a tree is unsafe and should be removed, we can use specialist equipment which shows the decay in the tree.

If we must remove a tree it will be cut about one metre from the ground. Stumps are removed later. We have to check if anything will be disturbed and arrange for the path or verge to be repaired. We may wait until there are a number of stumps within an area before sending a contractor. This saves money.

Electricity, water, gas and cable companies have agreed to follow a code of practice to protect trees. They should only hand dig around trees.

How to help

You can help by watering new trees during dry weather. A couple of buckets of water once a week will make a difference.

If you mow grass verges please be careful when cutting around trees. Any damage to the bark will reduce the life of the tree.

HEDGES

Hedges

- Most hedges are privately owned on property boundaries and are the sole responsibility of the landowner.
- Hedges by the side of the road that we do own, are cut once a year during autumn or winter.
- Hedges shouldn't be cut during the spring or summer months when birds are nesting, unless for safety reasons.

Shrubs - We prune and weed our shrub beds once a year during the autumn or winter months.

How to help

If you want to cut back shrubs and hedges there may be birds nesting in them between February and September. It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to disturb the nests of wild birds so you should check the areas you plan to cut beforehand.

Using hand shears saves energy, reduces emissions and keeps noise down.