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Urban Renewal

Pimp your pavement, guerrilla gardeners tell city dwellers

How's the pavement outside your house looking? Dull, grey and studded with gum? Perhaps it's time to pimp your pavement – the name of a new campaign launched by a group of guerrilla gardeners in London, who are asking people to make the most of their streets.

Abandoned flower beds, neglected traffic islands and tree pits are all ripe for cultivation, according to the maverick horticulturists, who believe that instead of waiting for the council to do something, citizens should get planting of their own accord.

"London's pavements should be healthy, colourful, living streets," says 32-year-old Richard Reynolds, who founded Pimp Your Pavement in 2004, after he began planting at night-time in the neglected spaces around his Elephant and Castle tower block. "I'd like people to think, 'This is my pavement, and I'm going to make it look flash.'"

"I did the tree outside my house, and it spiralled from there. I ended up doing the whole street"

Pimp Your Pavement also aims to persuade local authorities and bodies such as Transport For London to become more flexible about people taking matters into their own hands. "It costs Transport For London £600 to water a central reservation on Old Kent Road," says Reynolds. "I'd like people to be allowed to do it to make it head-turning and look full of character rather than letting a contractor charge the taxpayer hundreds of pounds. But in London there's just a silent toleration of what community gardeners are doing. I'd like the authorities to be more encouraging, particularly as they don't have any money."

With waiting time for allotment space regularly reaching 40 years, this could be just the solution. Sean Canavan from Kentish Town, who is blind, has transformed his road into a local attraction. "I did the tree outside my house and it spiralled from there," he says. "I ended up doing the whole street. If I'm blind and can do something like this, imagine what a sighted person could do."

www.pimpyourpavement.com



Richard Reynolds (kneeling, right) founded Pimp Your Pavement in 2004