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The root hacker

Richard Reynolds is leading a mission to green the streets – without asking for permission

> START

> In the last few years a radical movement has been germinating in the urban wastelands of London. But the only explosions this group of activists are interested in are colourful outbursts of flora in the otherwise neglected pockets of land in the big city. When it comes to Richard Reynolds (pictured right, on the traffic island between George Road and Westminster Bridge Road) and his merry band of guerrilla gardeners, think bloom instead of boom.

Armed with little more than a pitchfork and a keen pair of secateurs, this 32-year-old advertising planner from Devon has taken it upon himself to revitalise ugly patches of dirt near his home in the Elephant and Castle, and famously planting sunflowers opposite the Houses of Parliament. But unlike the Green Guerrillas of 1970s New York (who first coined the term) or other activists who have seeded political messages in the lawns of politicians, Reynolds claims his message is aimed more at the grassroots.

Through his activities and his website, guerrillagardening.org, where he offers advice on how to make “seed bombs” among other things, Reynolds has attracted more than 13,000 followers. His aim is not to enrage land owners or politicians, though, but to simply get people gardening, he says.

“My raison d’être is appreciating land as a precious urban resource,” he says. Lacking his own bit of turf and seeing so many derelict patches in the city frustrated him. “I didn’t just want it tidied up, otherwise I would have contacted the council. I wanted to do it myself.” **Duncan Graham-Rowe**



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Neo-Amish	Techno-fetishist	Trad-luddite

PHOTOGRAPHY: SHAMIL TANNA

↑ IN THE GARDEN

- 1 Cabbage palm (*Cordyline australis* – already in situ)
- 2 Wormwood (*Artemisia chamaemelifolia*)
- 3 English lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*)
- 4 Iris (*Iris germanica*)
- 5 Photinia (*Photinia x fraseri* “Red Robin”)
- 6 Rock rose (*Cistus x argenteus* “Silver Pink”)

