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London Evening Standard

CAN YOU DIG IT?

From 'ledge veg' to pavement pimping: the new crop of urban gardeners

LondonLife

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Best for 2012 Olympics

MODERN MARCHIONESS

AUTHOR NICOLA SHULMAN ON HER PASSION FOR A TUDOR POET AND BEING PART OF A MEDIA MAFIA

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OLYMPIC PARK SEMTEX SCARE



TWO 2012 GUARDS ARE 'CAUGHT WITH EXPLOSIVES'

Matthew Beard and Justin Davenport

A HUGE security review was ordered today at the Olympic Games park in east London after two guards were caught with explosives.

Police said a 40-year-old woman dog handler was arrested after her vehicle was searched and she was found in possession of Semtex and a sub-

stance suspected to be cocaine. It also emerged today that a man aged 43 was arrested yesterday at home in Wales on suspicion of possessing an explosive substance. He was being questioned today at an east London police station.

Both suspects are believed to be employees of London 2012's official private security firm G4S. The arrests are a major embarrassment to the

Olympic authorities, coming just weeks after the company was awarded a £130 million contract to protect the 500-acre site.

Under the deal, it will supply 10,000 guards for security at all Games venues across Britain. The woman was arrested on Tuesday at a car park

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Libya: Six of Gaddafi's henchmen 'set to defect'

Nicholas Cecil and Joe Murphy

BRITAIN is in secret talks with at least six more of Colonel Gaddafi's henchmen to desert him, The Standard reveals today.

A Government source said: "We are talking about half a dozen people in key positions."

After the Libyan foreign minister Moussa Koussa fled to London, Foreign Secretary William Hague urged more senior officials in Gaddafi's regime to realise the game was up.

He said: "His resignation shows that Gaddafi's regime, which has already seen significant defections to the opposition, is fragmented, under pressure and crumbling from within. Gaddafi must be asking himself: 'Who will be the next to abandon him?'"

"We encourage all those around Gaddafi to abandon him and embrace the better future for Libya that allows political transition and real reform that meets the aspirations of the Libyan people."

Washington sources today confirmed that small teams of CIA agents had been dropped into Libya.

President Obama was reported to have signed an order allowing them to launch covert operations to support the rebels. British SAS teams and MI6 agents are also in Libya.

The rebels today came under fresh bombardment and were forced back towards Ajdibaya as Gaddafi's forces continued their advances eastward, winning back much of the ground they had lost in earlier days.

British Tornado jets destroyed three tanks, armoured vehicles and surface-to-air missile sites in strikes yesterday.

Families of Lockerbie victims welcomed Mr Koussa's arrival in Britain, hoping it will finally reveal the

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Who ate all the Greek pies?

Forget steak and kidney and go for the Hellenic option

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WHERE TO GO FOR A BACCHANALIAN FEAST, THE WIT OF VIRGINIA WOOLF AS A JOURNALIST AND THE MAGIC BEHIND MARVIN THE MAGICIAN

London Life



Flower power: guerrilla gardener Richard Reynolds with his plants at Elephant and Castle

THE PAVEMENT PIMPER
Richard Reynolds, 33
part-time adman

FOR Richard Reynolds, gardening is a battle. Against rubbish – "a lot of the job is just picking up litter" – and against the rules. "No way is it just open to me to garden where I want. There are still hurdles."

Reynolds is London's best known guerrilla gardener – which in his case means "gardening without permission on neglected public land".

His plots are near his tower block home in Elephant & Castle. He now claims five or six patches as "my garden" including some raised beds outside his block, two roundabouts, plus several beds at the base of trees on the pavements which are now home to pansies and tulips.

"Finding a place to plant is really not a big ask," he says, encouraging other Londoners to have a go.

"I call it 'pimping your pavements'. It's beautiful, the bees like it and being out here digging up the soil is a great conversation starter." Reynolds first

began guerrilla gardening in 2004. Keen on growing things since his Devon childhood, he was "frustrated by the neglect in my immediate vicinity and frustrated not to have a garden".

The council wasn't looking after the flower beds outside his block properly – so one night he decided to do it himself. "I asked the council if they would have given us permission if we had asked at the outset and they said, 'Absolutely not'. That is the vindication for me," he says.

"Doing it without asking was better for everyone. It saves them [the council] having to trust us or think about health and safety. It's too late for them to do anything about it, and the evidence of success is staring them in the face."

These days Reynolds's operation is well-recognised. From tomorrow Selfridges is housing Grow! – a concept store selling innovative urban gardening wares including guerrillagardening.org lavender pillows (£20) that Reynolds makes from his huge lavender patch on Westminster Bridge Road. His "Guerrilla Gardening Transport" – bike/trolley

CAN YOU DIG IT?

Pavement pimpers, moon bathers and pot cropsters – London boasts new varieties of the urban gardener, say **Jasmine Gardner** and **Victoria Stewart**

contraptions that carry all his gardening equipment – are also on display.

Whereas in 2008 he was nearly arrested for digging on the Michael Faraday memorial roundabout, he says: "Last night I was planting some wallflowers when two police officers came up to me and the first question was, 'What are

those blue ones?'" But the guerrilla element is still very much alive. "On Saturday night we made an opportunistic intervention in a brand-new location and Transport for London is going to get upset."

"TfL or any council would be very anxious if it appeared that they were

saying, 'Go for it, do what you like'. It did happen in Hull. One councillor said, 'I encourage guerrilla gardeners just to get out and do their thing'. But I've never heard of that in London."

Although Reynolds now owns his own home, he still lives in the same tower block – and still has no garden. "People said, 'Why don't you buy a flat with a garden?' I realised it's more enjoyable to do this."

"It suits the gardener who is a bit of an extrovert and for whom the rectangle at the back of your house just isn't enough. In London, if we don't do this then either it will be neglected or somebody will be paying somebody else to do it. In these times of limited resources, I think that's a waste of money. It's better people do it because they enjoy it."

Right now though, his main battle is with greenfly – spotted by two women who have stopped to study his tulips. "They noticed the greenfly," he despairs. "I've got to sort this out!"

JG

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