GOOD

have a neat summer

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THE VOLUNTEERS America has 1.5 million new veterans. Meet 11 of them inside.

ENGLAND

Horticulture Jamming

Londoners can relax: the newest subversives in their city are armed only with green thumbs. Cadres of illicit horticulturists, equipped with hoes and shovels, have been venturing into the night to plant guerrilla gardens—carefully landscaped areas in the small open spaces that cities build to beautify the landscape, but then so often leave fallow. The movement, cultivated online by 30-year-old Richard Reynolds, an admirer by day who moonlights as a renegade gardener, has spread throughout the United Kingdom, and guerrilla gardens have appeared as far away as Vancouver, Canada. Missions require reconnaissance, strategy, and stealthy gardening, and each successful planting strikes a blow for a more refined metropolitan aesthetic. —PATRICK JAMES

BELOW
Outdoor spaces in Los Angeles are being converted to “living rooms.”

LOS ANGELES

Parlor Park

Rather than fence off the trash-strewn lot beside its building—a stamping ground for drug users and prostitutes—one downtown Los Angeles community center added, instead, a few benches and flowers. Soon, neighbors began to hang out there, and the less desirable denizens vanished.

By beautifying the lot, the center transformed its use, and herein lies the vision of the Community Living Room project, run by the Los Angeles-based nonprofit group Verde Coalition: turn grim scraps of public land—like bus stops, traffic medians, or dangerous street corners—into welcoming public spaces. In Los Angeles, where many low-income communities enjoy almost no park space, a new “living room” cheaply and quickly creates a mini-sanctuary from the fast-paced and sometimes ugly reality of the city. Twelve community “living rooms” have been constructed so far, and the mayor’s office may soon help fund 1,000 more across the city, making Los Angeles more habitable—one bench at a time. —JENNY PRICE

ABOVE
Marauding green thumbs take action in the London streets.

PHOTO: Courtesy of Verde Coalition
PHOTO: Jonathan Warren