

# WHO CARES, WEEDS, AS GREEN ARMY SWINGS INTO ACTION

# THE GUERRILLA GARDENERS WHO COME BY NIGHT

by **TRISTAN NICHOLS**

Herald Reporter

A RUN-DOWN public space has been transformed into a thriving flowerbed overnight – thanks to the nocturnal efforts of a green army.

A gardening craze sweeping the world landed in Plymouth earlier this month when green-fingered members of the Guerrilla Gardening group descended on a patch of land next to Stoke car park.

Under the night sky, around 15 volunteer gardeners planted species including Japanese anemones, sage, lavender, berberis, bamboo and evening primrose to bring life back to the neglected green space.

The idea was put forward by Janet Reynolds, from Stoke, whose London-based son Richard, 29, was the founder of the Guerrilla Gardening group in October 2004.

Guerrilla Gardening aims to spruce up public areas, striking at night, with the gardeners contributing to the cost of the revamp.

"I love gardening and I hate to see good public space just sitting there in a state going to waste," said Richard, who started the group after growing increasingly tired of seeing run-down public spaces.

"Mum rang me knowing that I travel round London doing this sort of thing and suggested this space in Plymouth.

"We've spruced up 17 different locations and this is the first one I've co-ordinated outside of London.

"I thought it would be a bit different and a good chance to visit Mum. It has to be one of the best ones we've done, with a lot more variety than other gardens we've put together."

Guerrilla gardening began in New York in the early 1970s when a woman called Liz Christy founded the Green Guerrillas group.

Liz started the night-time craze in a bid to revive areas of Manhattan which were looking shabby and run-down.

Since the seed of the idea was planted, thousands of people across the world have become honorary members of the movement. In the South West of England alone, nearly 1,000 people are thought to be involved.

Richard described the random acts of kindness as being more fun than radical. "It's difficult to do it legitimately because of the health and safety issues involved," he added.

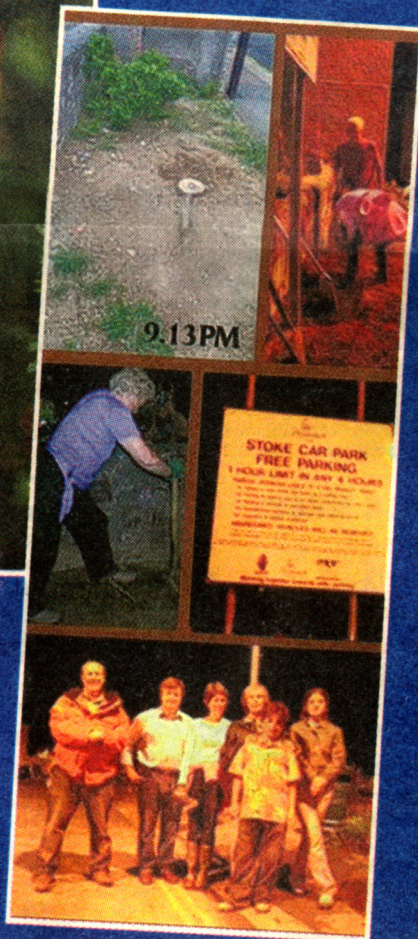
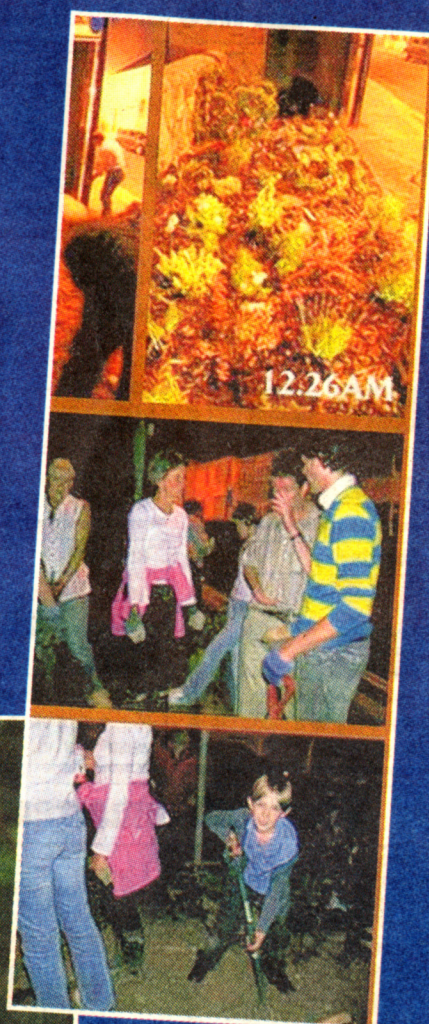
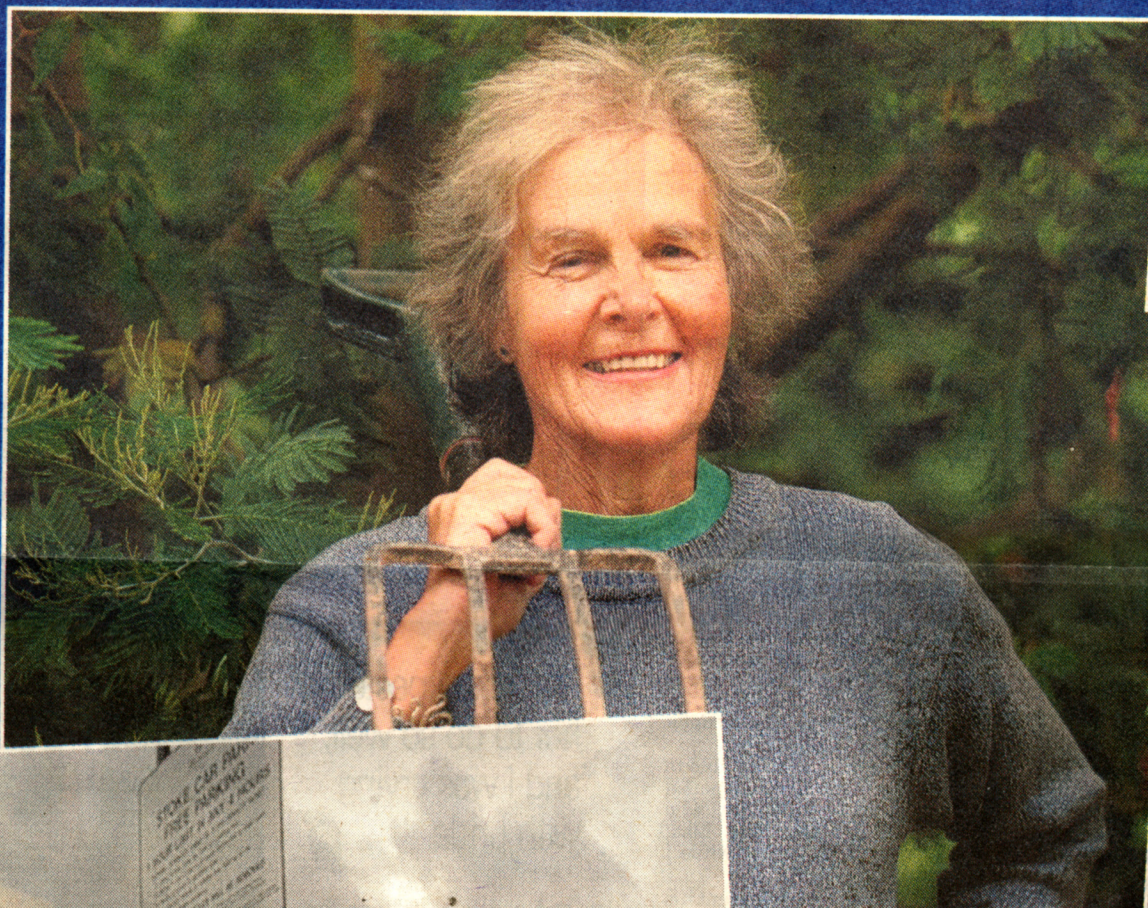
"Also, we don't want the Government forking out for it with all the other things that need to be funded.

"If we can pay for improvements ourselves, and spend our time doing it, then why shouldn't we improve things? I was nervous at first; that's why I chose to do it at night. It's just continued on from there. This isn't a radical movement; it's just a bit of fun. We should all take some responsibility in our own environments."

The land is believed to belong to Plymouth City Council, but a spokesman declined to comment.

■ Visit [www.guerrillagardening.org](http://www.guerrillagardening.org) for further information.

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**BEHIND ANEMONE LINES:** Above, Janet Reynolds celebrates striking a decisive blow against the forces of neglect and scrubbiness. Left: The transformed site in Stoke car park. Right: The night raiders in action on the Guerilla Gardening website

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