DINERS ESCAPE AS CAR RAMS RESTAURANT

by Gemma Briggs

£8,000 to save estate

Guerrilla gardeners operating under the cover of darkness have illegally turned an abandoned strip of land into a blooming oasis.

A dedicated volunteer green-fingered "vandals", aged between nine and 40, took to the streets armed with trowels and spades.

Their mission was to transform a grey and unsightly stretch pavement in Regan Way, Hoxton, with yucca plants and lavender.

A nature-loving resident, who claimed for many plants to care for them he could fit in his own tiny garden, called in the gardeners.

But they had to be quick - strictly speaking the operation on February 21 at 7pm was illegal.

Richard Reynolds, who runs the Guerrilla Gardening website, said: "I think it went well. It was quick and colourful. The residents said they couldn't remember when there were last flowers there. One lady cooked us dinner in the tower block.

He added: "What we're doing is vandalism. We're not asking for permission but no-one's ever complained. Some councils have even secretly given us money after we've done it."

Mr Reynolds, by day a freelance advertising planner who lives at the Elephant and Castle, set up his website www.guerrillagardening.org two years ago. The project relies on donations but Mr Reynolds added: "It's about people doing it themselves. People should think, "here's a patch of gribbly mud inside my house, why don't I do something about it?"

"I was doing it myself round my tower block. I wanted to share with more people what I was doing."

Guerrilla gardeners also planted 100 red tulips bulbs in Manor House, Finsbury Park, in November last year.