

## Urban diehards reclaim flowerbed in dead of night

# GUERRILLA WAR



### EXCLUSIVE

by **DAVID WILLIAMS**

A BAND of urban guerrillas have taken over part of Stratford and reclaimed it for local people.

The Guerrilla Gardeners trained their spades and pitchforks on a neglected flower bed in Vicarage Lane one night last week.

The hardcore horticulturalists have already attracted international attention for their nocturnal digs.

In Stratford, they took a long-ignored flowerbed and weeded it, covered it with

shingle and planted ornamental grasses.

Leader Richard Reynolds said: "The plants include *carex oshimensis* and *dactylis glomerata*, and they were selected for being able to cope with extremes of temperature.

"It looks a bit mean at the moment but they will grow to a reasonable size."

The spot was recommended by a friend of one of Mr Reynolds' troops. He said: "I saw it was a long-term orphaned piece of land that needed some love.

"It is a very self-contained plot, not a vague, shabby corner, and it is obviously a flowerbed, meant to brighten up the residential block and shopping parade nearby."

Mr Reynolds and his team, who all work free, were in Stratford for about three hours and finished shortly after midnight.

But work must continue on the site if it is to remain an attractive addition.

Mr Reynolds said: "Guerrilla gardening generally works a lot better if it is done by local people because they can pick up litter, and weed and water the plants.

"Three residents who joined in spontaneously and shops across the road assured us they would look after it."

He said the enthusiastic response from local people was the most positive he has ever come across during his

digs around the capital.

Mr Reynolds told the Guardian he was not interested in who owned the land he worked on, and since he began guerrilla gardening in late 2004 he has never attracted any hostility from local authorities.

Local cells of Guerrilla Gardeners are now shooting up all over the world, and the £264.76 spent in Stratford came from donations from around Britain and as far afield as California.

The Stratford dig was filmed by the BBC and will be broadcast as part of BBC 2's coverage of the Chelsea Flower Show on Wednesday, May 24.

For more information or to sign up to this budding movement, visit [www.guerrillagardening.org](http://www.guerrillagardening.org).

A Newham Homes spokesman said: "In this instance the look of the area has been improved and we would encourage the public to help us raise standards in Newham.

"However, we do not know if this work has been carried out by qualified gardeners and when landscapes are changed there are a lot of factors that have to be taken into consideration, such as what the residents want.

"At present we do not know how well the work has been done, so 'guerrilla gardening' is not something we would encourage."

[david.williams@london.newsquest.co.uk](mailto:david.williams@london.newsquest.co.uk)

**RECLAIMING THE STREETS: A Guerrilla Gardener works on last week's dig in Vicarage Lane, Stratford**

(PHOTOS: JONATHAN WARREN)



**HARDCORE HORTICULTURE:** Richard Reynolds (in red) explains his Guerrilla Gardening project to Stratford residents



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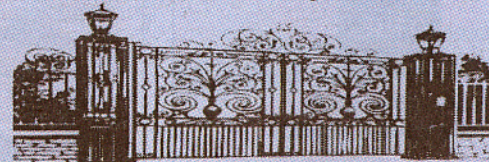
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