



LEFT: In the dead of night, Guerrilla Gardeners in the heart of Chicago plant seedlings in the name of urban beautification. ABOVE: A boot full of flowers. Pictures: Reuters



All the world's a garden for night-time guerrillas

By KATE KELLAND
LONDON

THEY work in the dead of night, armed with seed bombs, chemical weapons and pitchforks. Their aim: to beautify.

An army of self-styled Guerrilla Gardeners is growing across the world, fighting to transform urban wastelands into horticultural havens.

To document and encourage their victories, one of the movement's leaders has written a

handbook. *On Guerrilla Gardening*, by Richard Reynolds, defines the activity as "the illicit cultivation" of someone else's land.

"Our main enemies are neglect and scarcity of land," said Mr Reynolds, 30, a former advertising employee who wrote the book after his website, guerrillagardening.org, became a global focal point for activists.

"Land is a finite resource, and yet areas like this are not being used. That seems crazy to

me. And if the authorities want to get in the way of that logic, then we will fight them, but peacefully, showing them what we can achieve with plants."

On his website he writes: "Scattering seeds is the easiest way to guerrilla gardening. You do not even have to stop moving to do it."

One of their number, he points out, released handfuls of seeds while driving on the motorway. Mr Reynolds says he was inspired to write the book

after his first nocturnal gardening experience outside his own 1970s tower block in London, when he discovered he was part of a largely secret but worldwide movement.

Guerrilla Gardening is a crime in Britain, but Mr Reynolds insisted it was a victimless one. "Yes, by law this is criminal damage," he said. "But common sense would suggest it is quite the opposite."

He described a recent dig in central London where dozens of

police pulled up, and ordered him and fellow gardeners to down tools or face arrest.

"We reluctantly withdrew," he said, adding with a smile that they returned to finish the job an hour later when the coast was clear.

"This is a win-win war," he writes. "Take a public place of wasted opportunity and turn it into a garden. In time victory should be clear to everyone, and probably fragrant too."

REUTERS