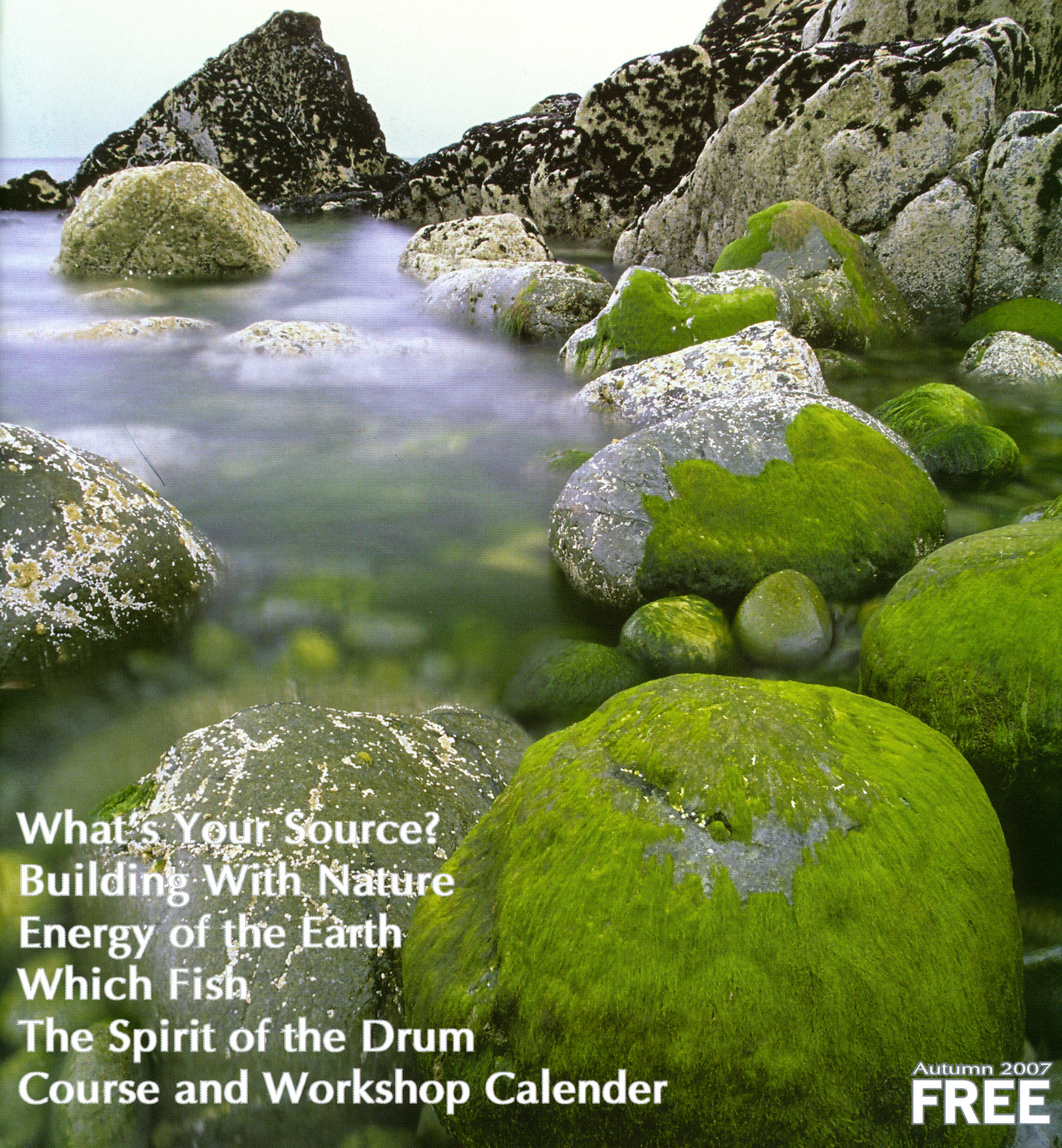


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Autumn 2007
FREE

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FAVOURITE PROJECTS

Gardening at Night



Richard Reynolds

You'll know they've been when you get up one morning to find that the view from your window has changed. But like the tooth fairy and Father Christmas they've made their green-fingered assault under the cover of night so you're unlikely to have seen them. Armed with bags of compost and trowels, theirs is the nocturnal battle against the neglect of our public places. They are the ones who turned that concrete eyesore at the end of your road into an oasis of flowering plants. They are the Guerrilla Gardeners and we salute them.

"Let's fight the filth with forks and flowers" cries Richard Reynolds, as he leads another covert battalion into war against the crisp packets and other detritus that have found homes on our kerb-sides and traffic islands. One thing these guerrillas can't bear is an orphaned public garden becoming a rubbish dump ... or a way-side verge stripped of trees and left to collect cigarette ends. Their aim is to make things more beautiful for everyone.

"Some guerrilla gardeners like me work to improve their cities" says Richard. "Some work to make the countryside that little bit more colourful. And some live off the vegetables they illicitly grow in road-side verges. It seems like common sense to me. We are running out of space and the land is finite, so it should be used rather than neglected. In some parts of the World, guerrilla gardening is the only way that people can grow food to eat".

Guerrilla tactics became the only option for Richard when he moved from the South West to London. "I grew up in Devon" he says, "mowing people's lawns and working on organic strawberry farms as holiday jobs. When I moved to the city I rented a flat in a tower block without thinking that it had no outside space - not even

a windowsill. Yet all around the block were neglected flower beds piled high with crisp packets. I became a frustrated gardener. The tenants association had recently imploded with infighting and imbezlement so I stayed well clear and decided to go out and garden in the middle of the night. Apart from anything, I thought I might be able to cheer up the rest of the tower-block".

"I was on my own to begin with and it was scary. But friends soon began to get interested. They would come round for dinner and we'd go out gardening afterwards - it's the perfect way of having fun in the evening after a day in the office. But it was only when I set up the website that I realised there are hundreds of us around the World, all discretely digging at night. We do it in the dark because we're less likely to encounter people who can't get their heads around what we're doing."

"Victory for me will be when everyone feels they can go out there and do it" concludes Richard who recently won a council award for the garden outside his tower-block. (They don't know how it got there!). "You just have to adopt a patch of neglected land and look after it in guerrilla fashion. Trying to do it through the system can end in chaos so it's just easier to get digging".

The guerrillas do their gardening on a tight budget, using donated plants, seeds and left-over compost. They need you! So pop a packet of seeds in your pocket and sprinkle as you go, or think about starting a local battalion. And most importantly ... don't forget to send your 'Before and After' pics to guerrilla HQ so we can all celebrate your success.

Green power to the people!!

www.guerillagardening.org

Guerilla Tactics:

1. Choose a neglected space - outside your house is best.
2. Find a source of plants and compost - try to get donations.
3. Wear a safety jacket to disguise yourself as a late-night worker or drain-cleaner - it's safer too!
4. Get friends to help - or recruit passers-by who are usually keen to get involved.
5. Put up a sign to let people know - then they'll look after it for you.
6. Sort out transport if gardening further from home. There's no need for a conventional load lugger. Open top cars are surprisingly good for transporting trees and plants can even be strapped to your bicycle.
7. Figure out the water. Office drinking water dispensers are good for carrying large volumes, watering cans are great if you can afford them, or perhaps even dig a well as guerrilla gardeners in Berlin did this spring.
8. Pack a trowel when you go on holiday.
9. Post details or join the community on www.guerillagardening.org

Garden Sightings



Before

After

Date: April 07
Location: Stoke Car Park, Plymouth
Budget: £67.07
Plants: Love in a Mist, Pink Lavender, Fox Gloves