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A GUERRILLA IN THE MIDST?

ARE you sick and tired of seeing unkempt land covered in long scraggly grass, seemingly forgotten and unloved? As a keen gardener you may be tempted to tidy it up, but beware... The moment you plant out on someone else's property without their consent you have broken the law.

Across the world people have joined forces to become part of a 'Guerrilla Gardening' movement to beautify and plant barren or neglected land. That land is typically used to grow plants and/or vegetables, with the intention of beautifying an area.

As such, it's not about fighting with guns and bullets, but rather with fruit and flowers.

Comparatively speaking, guerrilla gardening has been slow to catch on in New Zealand compared to centres in the northern hemisphere. Sure, New Zealand does not have anywhere near the amount of barren, neglected land as other countries, but we're supposed to be clean and green and 100 per cent pure.

Earlier this year Richard Reynolds visited New Zealand (courtesy of the British Council) to speak to the People in Your Neighbourhood Project about 'Gardening without boundaries'. Richard's message was clear.

"Properly managed, guerrilla gardening could evolve from illicit, informal action into a social activity that the whole community can

get benefit from."

In the USA, Ron Finley's guerrilla gardening group has been planting vegetable gardens in South Central LA – in abandoned lots, median strips and along the curbs. Why? "Guerrilla gardening is for fun, for beauty and to offer some alternative to fast food in a community where the drive-thrus are killing more people than the drive-bys." Check out Ron's inspiring TED Talk on YouTube (which has had over a million views!). "Gardening is the most therapeutic and relaxing act you can do, especially in the inner city. What's more, guerrilla gardening brings people and communities closer," says Ron.

Back here in New Zealand... Following the Christchurch earthquakes, members of the public took it upon themselves to plant flowers around Christchurch to brighten up their city.

"I just thought it'd be lovely to see flowers rather than just weedy bits of grass in all these empty sections – and we've got so many here," a local celebrant confessed, admitting she is proud to say she has done her share of guerrilla gardening.

Will this type of gardening take off in New Zealand? Maybe, maybe not. Breaking the law is not acceptable. But neither is wasting valuable land that could be beautified and turned into a valuable green space that the whole community can enjoy and benefit from.