



Recycled planters in Matt Childs' 'Remix Garden' at Oxo Tower Wharf

Photo: Darryl Moore

POP-UP GARDENS

In the second of her new series, [Annie Guilfoyle](#) looks at temporary gardens: pop-up planting, pocket parks and horticultural installations

Does a temporary, pop-up-style garden have more relevance than the show garden? Can we still justify designing and building show gardens that cost from a quarter of a million pounds upwards? Maybe the reduced number of Main Avenue show gardens at Chelsea this year provides an answer.

I believe that pop-up gardens are the future. They are a great way to have fun, push the boundaries and attract media

attention. In a time of dwindling show garden sponsorship, they could be the way forward – more affordable, more accessible and potentially less elitist.

Short-lived show

Darryl Moore and business partner Adolfo Harrison MSGD established Cityscapes in 2012, a company based entirely on the idea of looking for empty plots in the Shoreditch area, with the intention of creating temporary gardens. They contacted landlords to discuss break clauses in lease agreements in order to use them as 'meanwhile' spaces. They saw this as an opportunity to present the public with new ideas about the ways in which the city can be designed and inhabited, acting as experiences in themselves, bringing people and plants together in imaginative ways.

They soon began working with South Bank and Bankside Cultural Quarter and moved their focus to that area, as there was a lot of interest and energy for these kinds of temporary projects from local Business Improvement Districts and Southwark Council. Their first two projects, the 'Eye Garden' with Andy Sturgeon (on the London Eye) and 'The Majesty' with Heywood and Condie in The Old Vic Tunnels, were both of limited duration (24 hours and five months respectively). Temporary gardens have always been central to Cityscapes, representing about 60% of its work, alongside permanent pocket parks, master planning and events.



One particularly innovative Cityscapes project was the 'Remix Garden' in 2013, which involved four designers: Jon Sims, Anoushka Feiler, Matt Childs and Dan Lobb MSGD. The idea centered around one space (at Oxo Tower Wharf) where using exactly the same materials recycled from a Wilson McWilliam show garden, each designer in turn reimagined the space and created a fresh design. "The four consecutive gardens provided a process-based 'performance', creating a sense of anticipation and occasions for discussion. The project also showed the creative ways that materials can be recycled," Moore explains.

Photo: Darryl Moore



Reclaiming the streets

The Chelsea Fringe, brainchild of writer Tim Richardson, has now been running for six years. It has grown way beyond Tim's early expectations. "Originally I thought we would only be able to survive for two years' maximum without regular funding. In fact, we have been able to operate an extremely large and eclectic international festival with over 300 events in 2016." Spreading far beyond the cosy confines of SW3, pop-up events have been staged across the UK from Bristol to the Isle of Mull, and as far away as Japan and Australia. Its success is remarkable, particularly because the organisation is run entirely by volunteers as a not-for-profit company. "I wish more people from the garden design world could get out of the Chelsea Flower Show bubble and visit Fringe events. We don't see many designers. Why is that I wonder?" asks Tim.

Looking further afield to the USA, since 2011, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) has been creating pop-up gardens in Philadelphia. Alan Jaffe, senior director of communications and media, explains how each year they select one or two derelict plots in downtown Philly, which are then transformed into an urban oasis from late spring through to the autumn. These temporary gardens help to showcase the community greening work carried out by the PHS, raising awareness of how vacant land can be used as community assets for urban revival. They inspire others to use horticulture, combined with excellent design, to beautify their neighbourhoods.

Guest designers are invited to get involved. Last summer, Californian landscape architect Walter Hood transformed an empty lot in the shadow of a railroad viaduct, a remnant of the city's industrial past, and turned it into an active, green gathering space. The viaduct above is being transformed by the city into a new, elevated linear park, →

Photo: Rob Cardillo



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Anoushka Feiler's Paperworks garden for Cityscapes, created in collaboration with choreographer Charlotte Spencer; 'It's in the bag' Annie's six-hour garden on Regent Street; the PHS pop-up community garden in 2016 at Viaduct Rail Park, Philadelphia, designed by Walter Hood

Photo: Annie Guilfoyle

"WE ONLY HAD TWO HOURS TO BUILD THE GARDEN AND ONE HOUR TO GET OUT – METICULOUS PRE-PLANNING WAS ESSENTIAL"



The 'Eye Garden' by Andy Sturgeon FSGD featured for one day on the London Eye



Photo: Misha Heller

CITYSCAPES' TIPS FOR TEMPORARY GARDENS

- 1. Anything under 28 days** is temporary and does not need planning permission, but if you want to stage formal events in the garden you may need an entertainment licence from the council
- 2. Carefully considered and co-ordinated** logistics are essential for getting things on and off site in busy areas
- 3. Risk assessments** need to be rigorous and insurance liability cover should be appropriate for large numbers of visitors
- 4. Afterlife of plants and materials** should always be arranged beforehand so that everything is reused
- 5. Just because something is temporary** doesn't mean that it doesn't require maintenance. This is more important than ever, as a neglected garden will not be a success
- 6. Publicity is vital** – let people know about your project by all available means

similar to New York's High Line. This pop-up helped to bring attention to this part of the city and build support for creation of the new park.

"The PHS pop-up gardens have helped spark a wave of new green spaces that invite visitors to enjoy Philadelphia's outdoor nightlife," Jaffe explains. "We will continue to transform vacant lots in other parts of the city, and hope to inspire our visitors to become more involved in PHS programs and other efforts to create green spaces. Many of our guests are young people who are interested in becoming more involved in their cities, and in ways they can improve their environment. That goes to the heart of the PHS mission to connect people with horticulture, and work with them to create stronger, healthier sustainable communities."

I too have delved into the transient world of pop-ups. In 2013, I was invited by Regent Street Retail Association to organise a 'Summer Streets' garden day. Over four consecutive Sundays in July, Regent Street was pedestrianised for a day. I asked a former student, Pre-Registered Member

Katharina Nikl, to join me. Our initial grandiose idea of turfing the whole of Regent Street was soon quashed when we discovered the potential cost, so we created a pop-up garden entitled 'It's in the bag'.

Our biggest challenge was that we only had two hours to build the garden and one hour to get out. Meticulous pre-planning was essential and the Apple Store kindly allowed us to prepare in their underground car park. The plants were delivered on Friday, and we spent the whole of Saturday positioning them into long fabric planters (normally used for growing potatoes). As soon as the police stopped the traffic on Sunday morning, a team trundled the planters out on Dutch trollies borrowed from the nursery. Turf was laid onto the tarmac and fresh hay bales became makeshift seats.

The garden was a huge success; everyone wanted to spend time lounging in the sun. Unfortunately the Regent Street retailers were less than happy, as the public spent more time lounging than shopping. No surprise, then, that in subsequent years, there have been no gardens to distract the shoppers. ○