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Angell Town estate residents get to work on Chelsea Flower Show exhibit

DAVID COHEN Friday 20 May 2016 11:37

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Helping out: Angell Town residents Joshua Homiah and Lorna Burke (standing) and Rosalind Henriques, Tunika Nsingo and Simon Gharthey (kneeling, from left) in the RHS Chelsea Flower Show garden (Alex Lentati)

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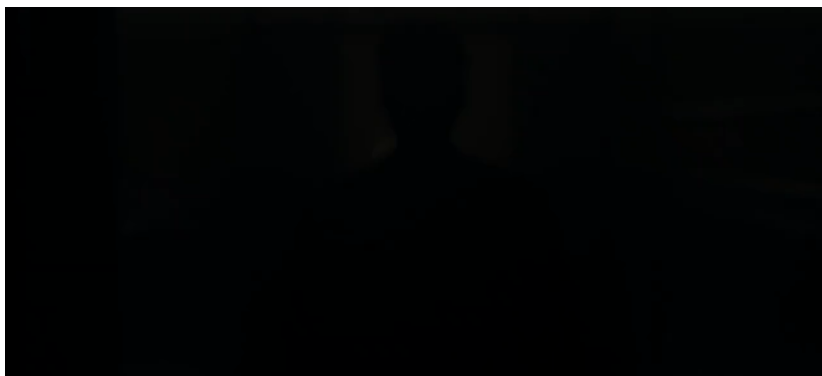


Over the high-pitched whine of drilling and the bustle of forklift trucks came a roar of laughter.

Garden designer Ann-Marie Powell was in the middle of her wild meadow of ornamental alliums, verbascums and “totally tangerine” geums, directing proceedings like an orchestral conductor on steroids.

“Another festuca behind the allium. Who’s in charge of the music? Can somebody change that s**t song?” More laughter from Ann-Marie.

“No, I’m not stressed! We’ve been going since 8am, it’s mid-afternoon, we’ve not yet had lunch. There is so much to be bloody done!”



Teads

This was the RHS Chelsea Flower Show as the public never see it, a frenetic construction site where the whiff of diesel infuses the aroma of roses in the week before the opening.

Yet for six gardening enthusiasts from Brixton’s Angell Town estate, in high-vis vests and steel-tipped boots, it was an exclusive chance to see how the show is put together.

It was also the day they got to help Ann-Marie build the RHS Greening Grey Britain Garden for Health, Happiness and Horticulture.

“I knew there were a lot of flowers, but not so many!” enthused trainee chef Joshua Homiah, 18, weaving roses onto a pergola walkway.

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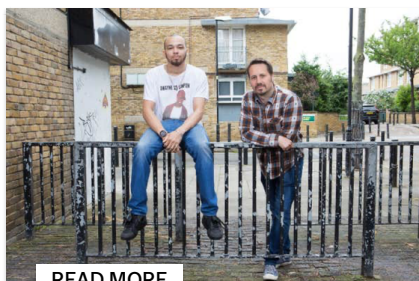
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Mother of two Tunika Nsingo, 39, said: “I watch Chelsea on telly and never dreamed I’d see it in person, but here I am planting lupins, learning from the experts. It’s special.”

The group were visiting as a result of a unique partnership between the Standard, Royal Horticultural Society and Angell Town.

When the show is over plants in the garden, about £40,000 worth, will be moved to Little Angel Park in the estate, which has become synonymous with our campaign The Estate We’re In.



Angell Town photo exhibition on show

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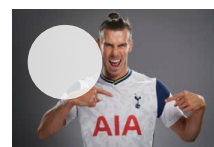
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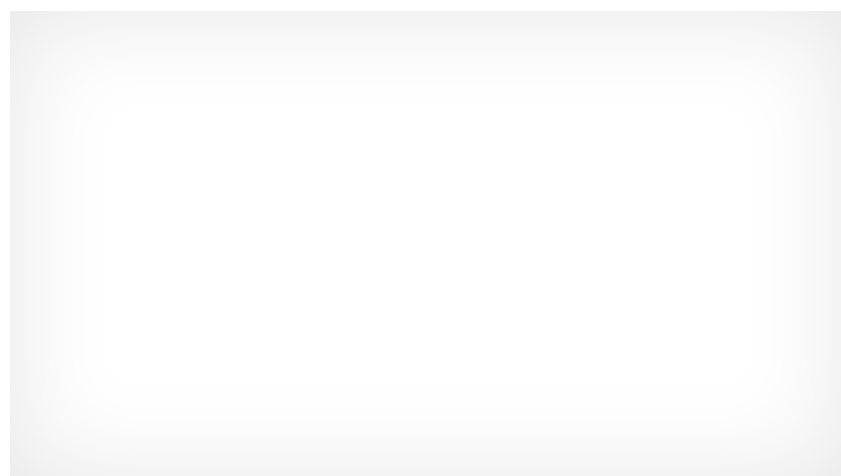


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The £16,000 cost of relocation and a £3,620 grant to maintain the garden have been bankrolled by our £1.5 million campaign.

The Angell Town group is led by Simon Gharthey, founder of social enterprise Progress, who has built up a 20-strong Friday gardening club on the estate. “Ann-Marie says she’s a bit behind schedule, but

we are going to help her,” he quipped.

Ann-Marie grinned. “I am the mind behind the madness. Don’t worry, we have until Sunday night to make it look immaculate.”

For her, the week before Chelsea is what it’s really all about: “It’s so deliciously indulgent to immerse yourself in horticulture.

You’re in a bubble, unaware of what’s going in the real world, creative energy’s flowing.” Her courtyard garden has water features, meadow borders and climbers.

An assistant said: “Ann-Marie plants like she dresses. She will pull off vibrant colour combinations others never dare.”

The Queen and Duke and Duchess of Cambridge will open Chelsea Flower Show on Monday, with the public attending from Tuesday.

The Estate We’re In

The Estate We’re In is a £1.5 million social change initiative funded by Citi banking group, the Cabinet Office, Linklaters law firm, property developers Mount Anvil and Citygrove Securities, Lambeth Council and the Evening Standard Dispossessed Fund.

The London Community Foundation, the charity that holds the Dispossessed Fund, plays a key coordinating role.

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