STATION SANCTUARY

GARDEN NEWSLETTER
SUMMER 2

Your bimonthly dig into garden happenings!



EMILY CORNER, SOW THE CITY

Emily Corner is the Operations Manager at Sow the City, a CIC that has helped people grow in their local communities and created green urban spaces since 2009. Sow the City has often been described by its CEO, Jon, as starting from ‘a packet of seeds and a bag of compost’. They are now a team of 9 and run projects across Greater Manchester.

The National Trust first invited Sow the City to be involved in the Station Sanctuary garden, building on previous collaborations at Castlefield Viaduct and other green space initiatives across Manchester that they had led. The garden's design process involved the designer Catherine Clarke and MASH sharing ideas, and it incorporated a theme of renewal through butterfly details and hexagonal planters that subtly nodded to the ‘Manchester bee’. The planting was selected to be low-maintenance, drought-tolerant and hardy enough to withstand a busy urban environment. Sow the City employed Eddie from ‘Edge CNC’ to help with the planters, and then garden elements were painted off-site before they were brought to Piccadilly, helping to minimise construction around the busy station.

Emily has been involved in Station Sanctuary as lead in Community Engagement for ‘Sow the City’ in phases throughout the project. The final phase involved reaching out to community garden networks, organising engagement sessions and bringing new groups into the space. She has also been part of the Sow the City team who’ve been running pop-up stalls during the summer holidays to engage families.

Working alongside Rebecca Lupton, the photographer in residence, Tom Stocks (The Chubby Northerner), the poet in residence, and Rachel Shore from MASH, Emily has created a joined-up programme of activities at Station Sanctuary. Also, she’s been able to run regular maintenance sessions with Network Rail's Place-making team (as well as other Network Rail teams) who were responsible for getting the garden idea off the ground, as well as connecting the general public to other green urban spaces around Manchester through the Station Sanctuary garden events.



ALL OTHER PHOTOS HIGHLIGHT A RANGE OF THE PLANTING FROM SOW THE CITY AND THE EVENTS THEY’VE RUN AT STATION SANCTUARY OVER THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS









sow the city

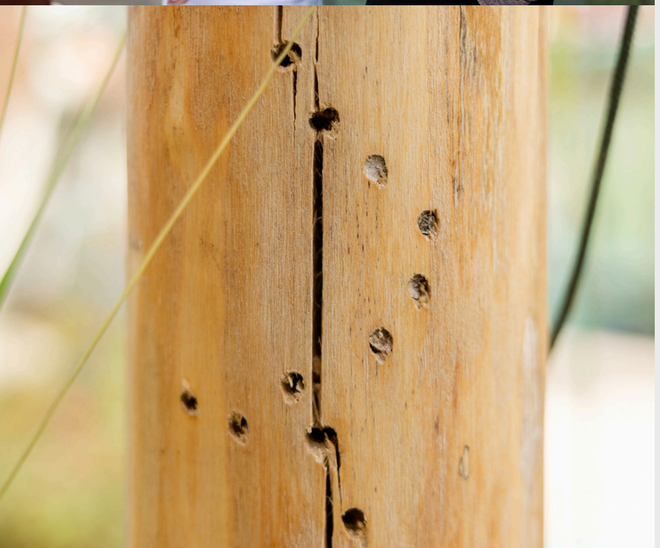
MASH

National Trust

NetworkRail







WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE GARDEN?

It's been a busy few months at Station Sanctuary, with plenty happening in and around the garden as summer starts to wind down. On 27 July, Tom, Kirby and Bec were up bright and early — 4am early! — putting up pavement poetry leaves around the station approach and Station Sanctuary. The leaves feature some of the lovely poems created by children from Armitage and Ladybarn Primary Schools during Tom's poetry workshops. It was definitely worth the early start to see their words popping up around the station!

Throughout the summer holidays, Sow the City also ran weekly family-friendly workshops in the garden, inviting passers-by to discover more about nature in an urban environment while getting creative and making all sorts of crafty bits and bobs, like wheat bags and key rings.

At the end of July, Photographer in Residence Bec and Poet in Residence Tom ran a series of photo walks and poetry workshops with local groups, including the Women's Environmental Network, Miles Platting Community Action Network and Our Room. Bec's walks encouraged participants to slow down, look closely at the nature around them and see the city through a different lens, while Tom's positive poetry workshop with Our Room coincided with Pride Month.

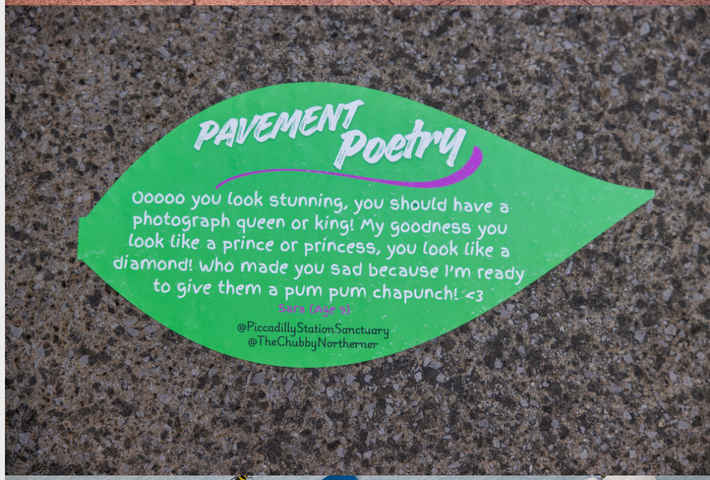
There was also a lovely collaboration between MASH and Our Room — a creative community for male, trans and non-binary people who sex work. Together, they spent time at the nearby Hulme Garden Centre getting creative, following on from photo walks that both groups had taken part in with Bec.

On 21 August, the Sow the City team had a staff day at Station Sanctuary and planted herbs in some of the concrete planters. We're looking forward to seeing them establish and add another layer of greenery, scent and — hopefully — pollinator-friendly flowers to the garden.

Perhaps the most exciting discovery came towards the end of summer. We noticed that solitary bees had moved into the bee posts that the women from MASH helped create. The posts were drilled with the initials of loved ones they had lost, giving them a particularly special meaning — and now they're providing a home for new life too.
Unlike honeybees and bumblebees, solitary bees don't live in large colonies with a queen and worker bees. Instead, each bee lives and raises its young independently. And they're far more common than you might think: solitary bees make up more than 90% of bee species worldwide.

So, as summer draws to a close, our little corner of Manchester is doing what we hoped it would — bringing people, creativity and nature together, and providing a place for wildlife to make itself at home.









What's growing?

WHITE GAURA -
GAURA LINDHEIMERI OR LINDHEIMER'S BEEBLOSSOM

It is widely celebrated by gardeners for its airy, elegant texture and an exceptionally long blooming season that stretches from early summer all the way until the first hard autumn frost.

- It forms a bushy clump of dark green, lance-shaped leaves, sending up tall, elegant flower wands that can reach anywhere from 2 to 4 feet (60–120 cm) tall.
- Thrives best in full sun. It needs at least 6 hours of direct sunlight daily. In too much shade, the long stems will grow weak, floppy, and fall over. It is drought tolerant, however. Once established, gaura can cope well with dry conditions, making it a good choice for gardens where watering is limited.
- Long flowering season: Its delicate white flowers can bloom from early summer into autumn, providing a long-lasting display.
- Pollinator friendly: The flowers are attractive to bees and other pollinating insects, making it a useful addition to a wildlife-friendly garden.
- Hardy in the UK: Many varieties can tolerate British winters, although hardiness varies between cultivars.
- Requires well-draining soil. It performs brilliantly in poor, sandy, stony, or loamy soils. Do not plant it in heavy clay or overly rich, fertile soil, as this causes rapid, weak leaf growth instead of flowers.



Meet me at the garden

Who's using the Station Sanctuary Garden? Garden users have an informal chat with resident photographer, Bec, about train journeys, green spaces and wellbeing

Bec: Hello, could you introduce yourself?

Savid: My name is Savid and I'm from Indonesia. I live in Indonesia, but I'm visiting Manchester to see my son, who has recently started a job here.

Bec: What brings you to Piccadilly train station and the Station Sanctuary garden?

Savid: My son has just graduated from university in Warwick, so we came over for his graduation. He's now working in Manchester, so we're visiting him. Today, we're taking the train to Liverpool for a day trip.

Bec: Have you travelled by train in the UK before? Yes, I've used the trains a few times while visiting my son.

Bec: I spotted you taking photographs of the plants outside the station. Can you tell me about your photography?

Savid: Photography is a hobby I started about three or four years ago. Wherever I go, I take my camera or just use my phone to take pictures and share them on Instagram.

Bec: What do you like photographing?

David: Everything! I don't just photograph one particular thing. I like cities, landscapes, portraits, flowers — everything. Wherever I go, I like to take photographs.

Bec: We're in a relatively new green space here, at Station Sanctuary. What do you think about green spaces in cities?

Savid: In Jakarta, where I live, there have been lots of efforts to create more green spaces, with more parks and gardens for people to enjoy. I think green spaces are very important for cities because they provide areas of greenery and peace in landscapes dominated by buildings. Near my home, there's a small park where I like taking morning walks. I also love taking photos of the flowers and small animals there. I really enjoyed the green spaces in Manchester too, especially the area outside the station where I was waiting for my train.