

Young designer demonstrates how front gardens are the key to transforming towns and cities

Aspiring landscape architect and University of Sheffield student, Olivia Copley, 21 is set on creating her long border garden 'Small Actions, Big Impact' at this years RHS Tatton Park flower show, demonstrating the vital importance of front gardens to boost biodiversity, create green corridors and improve wellbeing.

Having grown up in the rural Shropshire countryside, where she was surrounded by a plethora of biodiversity, and then moving to Sheffield for university, really made Olivia conscious about the disconnection she felt with nature being in an urban environment. She describes her daily walk to university as, 'Passings rows of terrace housing with virtually no plants'. This made her think about the potential that front gardens hold to boost ecosystems and habitats for nature within a city. She states that 'Green corridors are essential in providing connectivity to parks and green spaces, allowing nature to flow throughout the city rather than staying confined to the park gates, and the best way this can be achieved is through the power of front gardens.'

An urban front garden is arguably more important than any other as it's impact reaches far beyond it's residents and the positive effects are felt by everyone that passes by on foot, by car or on the bus enlivening the mundane commute. The impact on people and their well being is every bit as important, and beautiful green spaces filled with birds and insects has such a positive effect on people's health too.

Taking inspiration from her rural upbringing as well as lectures in ecology and planting some of which were from Nigel Dunnett, she will be creating a multifunctional space that mimics a front garden which she hopes to demonstrate to people that no matter how little the space, every small action adds up to make a big impact. Her design features a reclaimed brick pathway which leads to a woven willow archway mimicking a 'front door' created by local Shropshire willow sculpture Daisy Askins. Her planting is loose a free flowing with edibles, cut flowers and areas of shade and a repurposed water trough. Sharing a love of propagation with her mum, they have together grown some of her own planting from seed which will feature in the garden.

