

# Performative Gardening: Cultivating the Sustainable City

Amanda Yates

Urban Wellington is the site and stage for a summer season of garden performances that draw attention to urban ecologies and sustainable food production. From November to February a series of mobile gardens will move in a choreographed dance through the central city, greening urban space with fruiting plants and scented herbs. Sited near once productive Pa gardens, the movable plots remember that past through plantings of fruiting Cabbage trees and heritage kumara, and reference successive waves of immigrants who brought their food cultures with them parcelled in seed form. Designed by landscape architect Meaghan Pierce-Delaney and architect Amanda Yates the gardens, as urban performance, make a space for public discussions about food and energy security as oil becomes an increasingly contested and expensive resource.

Sustainability issues are complex and it is not easy to initiate public debate: making change at the small-scale and in a performative manner enables us to engage the public and act as a sign of change within the city. Events and workshops will be sited in the gardens – city-dwellers can eat organic cherry tomatoes while listening to an ecologist discussing urban ecologies or a health researcher talking about how to make healthier cities through sustainable design. As an urban intervention the performative gardening project will explore how we could cultivate our cities, generating food locally, forming urban farms that are also spaces for gathering, display and communal sustenance.

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