



Press Office

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Lovebirds grow London's next urban woodland in Valentine's celebration

Over 300 volunteers show their love for trees by planting 10,000 saplings to create London's next edible, urban woodland.

13 February 2016, London - Hundreds of Londoners were encouraged to show their love for trees this weekend in an alternative Valentine's Day celebration.

The *For the Love of Trees* event, organised by Trees for Cities in collaboration with Unilever and the Mayor of London and with support from the Climate Coalition, saw a total of 10,000 trees planted in King George's Field, Southall on Saturday 13th February. To mark the romantic occasion, couples were given the opportunity to dedicate a tree to someone they love and watch it flourish over time. The fun-filled event provided volunteers with a crash course in tree planting while raising awareness of the importance of trees to our urban environment and in tackling climate change.

The event marks the second mass tree planting event at the 29.5 acre King George's Field, which is set to be transformed into an edible urban woodland area, with a variety of fruit and nut bearing trees planted around the site's periphery. The initiative is linked to a partnership between Unilever and the Mayor of London to deliver 40,000 new trees. 20,000 are being offered to London's schools and 20,000 will be dedicated to developing the urban woodland in the Borough of Ealing. Since 2008, the Mayor has supported the planting of more than 400,000 trees in London.

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson MP said: “London is already one of the greenest and leafiest cities in the world and there is no doubt that planting trees helps to make the city a more pleasant place to live and work. By combining tree planting with Valentine’s Day, we have been able to show Londoners’ passion for trees and the great outdoors and the huge benefit they can have on our environment.”

Anna Owen, Unilever brightFuture Brand Manager said: “There can be no better way to celebrate Valentine’s Day than by giving a gift that will last a lifetime and also positively contribute to our city’s environment. The event enabled Londoners, whether young, *tree* and single or all loved up, to show their love through tree planting – by dedicating a tree to a friend or relative, our great capital, or for the environment. We want to reconnect Londoners with their environment and raise awareness of the importance of trees in fighting climate change and creating a sustainable future for generations to come.”

According to research released by Unilever many Brits are out of touch with native trees and do not understand of the crucial role they play in our daily lives. In a study of 1,000 families, just 1% of parents and children were able to recognise the UK’s most common trees. The study also revealed a huge knowledge gap in Brits’ understanding of climate change and the role of deforestation as a key contributing factor to rising temperatures. Only 38% of respondents realised that deforestation is responsible for more carbon emissions than all transport on the planet.

Indeed, after enduring one of the wettest Decembers on record, protecting our trees, which act as a natural flood defence, is essential. In the recent London i-Tree Eco report, produced by the Mayor of London and The Forestry Commission, and sponsored by Unilever, it was calculated that the surface area of trees within Greater London can help intercept over 3 million cubic metres of storm water each year; the equivalent of 1,365 Olympic swimming pools. The i-Tree Eco survey is a recognised method of valuing the benefits trees provide that people often take for granted.

Commenting on the project, David Elliott, Chief Executive of Trees for Cities said “Our trees are invaluable to our communities and it is important for us to recognise this. They provide us with shade, improve the quality of our air, create wildlife habitats, and are a vital element

of healthy recreational spaces. It was encouraging to see such a high turnout for our event on Saturday which clearly demonstrates how people of all ages are realising the importance of working together to improve our environment”.

-Ends-

Notes to editors

1, For the Love of Trees –London is a Greater London Authority partnership with Unilever UK to deliver 40,000 new trees and support activities relating woodlands. 20,000 to create a new woodland in Ealing which today’s mass tree planting contributes to. Schools across the city can apply for 20,000 new trees that come in packs with an array of different species, and instructions and volunteer help on successful planting. For more information visit www.london.gov.uk/loveoftrees

2, London iTree survey - The project is a partnership project including Forestry Commission, Greater London Authority, London Tree Officers Association, Trees for Cities, Tree Council, Natural England and Treeconomics. More information about the project and the full iTree report is available on the Forestry Commission website: www.forestry.gov.uk/london-itree

3. More information on trees: Trees can help mitigate climate change by sequestering atmospheric carbon as part of the carbon cycle. Since about 50% of wood by dry weight is comprised of carbon, tree stems and roots can store up carbon for decades or even centuries. Over the lifetime of a single tree, several tons of atmospheric carbon dioxide can be absorbed. Carbon storage relates to the carbon currently held in trees tissue (roots, stem, and branches), whereas carbon sequestration is the estimated amount of carbon removed annually by trees. An estimated 2,367,000 tonnes (approximately 15t/ha) of carbon is stored in London’s trees with an estimated value of £147 million. Trees are also good at lowering NO₂ and PM₁₀ some of the UK’s most common pollutants.

About Unilever:

Unilever is one of the world’s leading suppliers of Food, Home and Personal Care products with sales in over 190 countries and reaching 2 billion consumers a day. It has 172,000 employees and generated sales of €53.3 billion in 2015. Over half (57%) of the company’s footprint is in developing and emerging markets. Unilever has more than 400 brands found in homes around the world, including Persil, Dove, Knorr, Domestos, Hellmann’s, Lipton, Wall’s, PG Tips, Ben & Jerry’s, Marmite, Magnum and Lynx.

Unilever’s Sustainable Living Plan (USLP) commits to:

- Decoupling growth from environmental impact.
- Helping more than a billion people take action to improve their health and well-being.
- Enhancing the livelihoods of millions of people by 2020.

Unilever was ranked number one in its sector in the 2015 Dow Jones Sustainability Index. In the FTSE4Good Index, it achieved the highest environmental score of 5. It led the list of Global Corporate Sustainability Leaders in the 2015 GlobeScan/SustainAbility annual survey for the fifth year running, and in 2015 was ranked the most sustainable food and beverage company in Oxfam’s Behind the Brands Scorecard.

Unilever has been named in LinkedIn’s Top 3 most sought-after employers across all sectors.

For more information about Unilever and its brands, please visit www.unilever.com. For more information on the USLP: www.unilever.com/sustainable-living/

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About Trees for Cities

Trees for Cities is the only independent charity working on a global scale focussed entirely on planting urban trees, inspiring Children to grow and eat good food and providing volunteering opportunities to bring local people together. Originally established in 1993 as Trees for London, demand for our services has grown and we now plant trees in 25 cities across the UK and overseas.

Since our inception we have engaged over 70,000 people to plant 570,000 trees focussing on health, food security, environmental protection, and providing opportunities for education and learning through our Edible Playground and Urban Forest programmes.

Our vision to plant trees in cities is global. However, we know the importance of a local focus – we empower and work with local people to strengthen their community. We are a game-changing, ambitious organisation which sets the standard for urban tree planting worldwide. (www.treesforcities.org)

About the Mayor of London

The Mayor has led a number of initiatives that aim to increase the number of trees in London. These include:

The Mayor's Street Tree Initiative, delivered in partnership with the Forestry Commission saw 20,000 street trees planted across the capital. The Mayor has spent £5.7m on the Street Tree Initiative since 2008 with over £3m having been match funded by the recipients of the grant.

RE:LEAF - a partnership campaign led by the Mayor to protect the capital's trees and encourage individual Londoners, businesses and organisations to plant more trees.

The London Tree and Woodland Community Grant Scheme (CGS) supports projects that promote or protect trees and woodlands and engage local communities. In 2015-16 the Community Grant Scheme is supporting 24 projects taking place across London from November 2015 to February 2016. These projects will plant 4,000 trees and involve thousands of volunteers. Over the three grant rounds from 2012-15 the CGS supported 58 projects which involved over 8,000 people in tree-planting and woodland management, and over 8,000 trees were planted

Our Big Green Fund is investing £3 million into improving 11 areas of London. This funding is being used to create high quality open spaces connecting town centres, public transport hubs, employment and residential areas with parks, open spaces and the Thames.

The funds will make parts of London's more accessible through walking and cycling routes and more able to buffer the impacts of flooding or heat waves. The spaces will be better places to play, socialise, and be more attractive to wildlife.

Pocket parks are part of the Mayor's London's Great Outdoors - the programme to improve streets, squares, parks, and canal and riverside spaces across London. Pocket parks are small areas of inviting public space for all people to enjoy, providing relief from the hustle and bustle of the city. All of our £2million pocket park funding has now been allocated to over 100 parks in 26 London boroughs.

