

## Action on Poverty Conference Walk Notes: Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2024

Introduction: Who I am. Walking as a research practice since 2008. City Tour Guide, Community Night walks between 2012 and 2020, Walks as a way to become acquainted with place, or as a tool for research.

Today's walk will be an opportunity to meet some wayward plants living alongside us on campus - Plants as a portal to discuss a number of projects which consider urban nature and more recently Nature Recovery, and to begin to discuss rights to nature, and the role we all play in considering biodiversity and climate change.

How we will walk, how long for and the stops we will make along the way.

Before we move on: \*English Victorian (1820 – 1914) Language of Flowers – Floriography was the practice, during the English Victorian Era, of sending secret messages through the gifting of flowers. This special language saw a whole variety of plants and flowers assigned a meaning, and even the hand which was used to pass the flowers over meant yes, if passed from the right hand or no from the left.

Nature Recovery - 2023 State of Nature Report Declines of our flora Since 1970 more than half of our flowering plants, mosses and their relatives have been lost from areas where they used to thrive. 54% of flowering plants and 59% of bryophytes (mosses and their relatives: liverworts and hornworts) across Great Britain have decreased in where they are found. This means plants such as Heather and Chamomile are becoming less common.

### Plant 1 Clover: **Clover (Think of Me)**

In Celtic mythology, the clover, specifically the four-leaf clover, is considered a powerful symbol of luck and protection. The ancient Celts believed that finding a four-leaf clover brought good fortune and warded off evil spirits. They saw the four leaves as representing the four cardinal directions, symbolizing balance and harmony in nature. The clover was also associated with the Celtic goddess Brigid, who was believed to govern healing, poetry, and fertility.

Lots of uses and reasons to grow Clover:

- Honey production: Bees love clover flowers and use them to produce a light-colored, mild-tasting honey.
- Green manure: Farmers can use clover as a green manure crop to improve soil health.
- Ground cover: Clover can be planted as a ground cover to prevent weed growth and erosion.

Plant blindness (From Gardens Where we feel secure) by Susanna Grant and Rowan Spray ‘plant blindness – Elisabeth Schussler and James Wandersee coined the term defining it as the inability to see or notice the plants in ones own environment.’ The more urbanised we are, the more detached from nature we become and the less able to recognise plants. It takes a visual shift to start noticing these plants and once that door is opened it can be transformative of the way you perceive your surroundings.’

This idea that connecting to nature can be transformative for neighbourhoods in seeing and reimagining their place is coming to take up a central position in the work we are doing at a neighbourhood level at The Portland Inn project. Through the plants today I will share some of the tenets of the work we are doing to tackle social and environmental justice for our neighbourhood.

## Plant 2 Rose

The rose, a timeless symbol of love and passion, was paramount in Victorian floriography. The color of the rose added layers to its basic meaning. Dark crimson roses were the ultimate symbol of eternal love, a powerful expression of deep affection. White roses, in contrast, were associated with purity, innocence, and in some cases, new beginnings, making them a common feature in bridal bouquets. Yellow roses had a slightly ambivalent meaning, often symbolizing jealousy or a decrease in love, while pink roses conveyed a sense of admiration and a softer, more tender love. Orange roses were less common but symbolized a fascination or a bridge between friendship and love.

Rose water is a beauty product that can be used on the skin and has antibacterial properties

Portland Palissy – Clay biodiversity Eco-report – baseline data to understand interventions we can make

Plant 3 Dock – patience Juice from the leaves can be applied as a compress to heal bruises, and seeds have been used to treat bronchitis, colds and coughs, constipation and diarrhoea (so everything really!)

The Fern Brick – small interventions – encouraging growing in shaded areas.

Nettle: cruelty or slander brings us to the Stinging Nettle. The irritant substance which causes the stinging sensation when the nettle is touched is a mixture of both formic acid and histamine. Extremely rich in vitamins and minerals, the plant has a variety of culinary uses, in teas, soups and as an alternative to spinach in all manner of dishes. It has been used to treat many ailments too including eczema, asthmas and hayfever. It also has a number of

species of bugs and butterflies that rely on it as an important food plant. The seeds are particularly full of nutrients.

The CHIA

Buddleia – rebirth resurrection and new beginnings

Buddleia plant native to central china and Japan - Buddleia is a popular garden plant that was introduced into the UK from China in the 1890s and has now become widely naturalised on waste ground, along railway cuttings and in urban areas. Its familiar purple flowers bloom from June to October and attract all kinds of butterflies and moths looking for nectar sources.

neighbourhood workshop

Great willow herb the plant was here in the Victorian era, and used as a garden plant – but was not assigned a meaning – what do we think it could symbolize?- The plant's anti-inflammatory properties make it an effective remedy for skin conditions such as eczema and dermatitis, and its astringent properties help to soothe digestive issues such as diarrhea and indigestion. In addition to its medicinal uses, Great Willowherb has a number of other uses. For example, it can be used as a natural dye, producing a bright pink or purple colour when the flowers are boiled with an alkaline substance such as lye. Its fibrous stems have also been used to make baskets, mats, and other woven items.

A sustainable building for the neighbourhood and as a demonstrator for a wider emancipation for neighbourhoods like ours.