

COVID Memorial Garden - A Place of Reflection

This Memorial Garden has been designed with residents from Plaistow Community Neighbourhood in memory of those who lost their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic and to honour the front-line services and volunteers who supported the borough's most vulnerable residents throughout.

A sensory garden where you can explore sight, sound and touch, the space features different planting areas integrated with hand crafted artworks. You are invited to spend time here remembering and reflecting, while experiencing the seasonal changes in nature, throughout the year.

The garden features three hand-carved timber totems designed for the space and inspired by community reflections on the impact of social isolation and the lack of physical contact with family and friends during periods of lockdown. You are invited to explore these totems by following the engraved 'touch trails'. The totems each represent a different theme:

Support

Reflect on the ecosystem and creatures that are supported by our trees. These engravings show the wildlife that rely on trees from bugs and birds, to bats, woodpeckers and earthworms. Follow the touch trail formed of ivy and surrounded by the animals and birds that seek support from the tree.

Community

These engravings show the underground soil networks (mycelium) through which the trees communicate with each other and the natural world around them. The touch trail depicts these important networks that connect through the soil and is surrounded by insects and feathers of local birds signifying the pollination of the trees.

Regrowth

Symbolised by the seasonal changes of the trees in Plaistow Park, these intricate engravings show the cycle of seasons throughout the year – spring, summer, autumn and winter. The touch trail is formed of tree branches, surrounded by falling leaves.

This Memorial Garden commemorates the lives that were sadly lost to COVID-19.

It also celebrates our local community's incredible generosity, strength and courage.

We remember the extraordinary kindness and bravery of local people from all walks of life - who with traditional East London spirit came together to support each other in a time of need and adversity. We remember how we checked up on each other, the video calls, the taking up of new hobbies, getting to know neighbours, clapping together, the renewed sense of the importance of family and friends, and new ways of communicating and connecting with nature.

We simply could not have made it through without the workers in the NHS, transport, and other vital services, those who provided care and all the services we relied on every day.

This memorial garden is a lasting tribute to the period in all our lives that future generations can visit, sit, reflect and remember.

Remember the kindness, love and support; remember the community spirit of Newham; remember the people that we lost.

This love that was shared is a memory that will live on.

**Together, We made a difference.
Together, We are Newham.**

Rain Garden

A slightly lowered planting area designed to collect and absorb rainwater during periods of strong rainfall. It provides habitat for plants and pollinators.

Blooming period: During spring, summer and autumn, winter aspects through evergreen plants, dried grasses and bright coloured stems of the dogwood shrubs.

Apple trees

Representing good health, happiness and abundance, they provide food and shelter for wildlife including pollinators, birds and small mammals.

Blooming period: during spring, harvest during late summer and early autumn.

Wildflower meadow

Wildflowers have long been used as a symbol to celebrate the memories of those we have lost. Keep an eye on the flowers and wildlife here throughout the blooming season. Wildflowers provide food for pollinators such as bees, flies, moths and butterflies and can also support other small wildlife such as small mammals, bats and birds.

Blooming period: spring and early summer

Memorial Garden totems

Made from sustainable green oak, each timber totem has been hand-carved and hand-painted. Celebrating nature, traditional craft techniques and reflecting the local ecosystem, they are a reminder of the wonders and healing benefits of nature.

Ornamental & sensory planting

Take a moment to listen to the sounds of the natural park environment and watch these shrubs gently sway in the breeze. This sensory planting zone is designed to stimulate all our senses, including touch, smell and sound.

Blooming period: spring, summer and autumn, winter aspects through flowerheads and dried grasses.

