

Tennis-court sized scrap of Bristol to become 'tiny forest'

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A scrap of ground, the size of a tennis court, beside a river in Bristol is being transformed into a “tiny forest” featuring 600 trees as part of a nationwide initiative to bring more precious woodland into cities.

The area, on a plateau next to the River Trym in Southmead, will be one of a string of such projects across the UK featuring trees ranging from mighty oaks to birch, elder, blackthorn and guelder rose.

Over the next three years, the ambition is to plant more than 100 tiny forests, with spots already earmarked in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Leicester and Glasgow.

The tiny forest in Southmead is part of a wider project called the Trym Valley Open Space Regeneration that aims to bring back trout to the waterway and includes the planting of the rare black poplar, on the river bank.

Tiny forests are based on woodland management methods developed in the 1970s in Japan, where many different species are planted closely together in urban areas.

The environmental charity [Earthwatch Europe has planted two tiny forests in Oxfordshire](#), where it has its UK base, but is working with the [OVO Foundation](#) to create many similar plots in urban areas across the country.

Earthwatch says tiny forests are capable of attracting more than 500 animal and plant species within the first three years and use no chemicals or fertiliser.

Clarie Miles, of the group [Sustainable Southmead](#), said local people were excited to see if planting in such a small space would work.

“It’s part of a bigger regeneration project that includes improving the river and planting a community orchard. But we’re looking forward to seeing how this tiny forest will work,” she said.

Residents and members of the group cleared the area of fly-tipped items such as motorbikes and furniture. “The community has really come together, it’s amazing to see,” said Miles.

Earthwatch says each forest is expected to engage up to 100 volunteers on planting day, up to 40 people on monitoring days and around five volunteers as a “keeper team” to act as the forest ambassadors and support with maintenance.

The idea is also to encourage young people to work as “citizen scientists” to collect data on topics from carbon absorption to flood mitigation and biodiversity.

The tiny forest concept is based on a management methodology developed in the 1970s by the Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/feb/02/tennis-court-sized-scrap-of-bristol-to-become-tiny-forest>