

Antionette (Toni) Assirati BSc DipHE DMS FRSA

9.11.1957 - 4.5.2020



It is with sadness that we report the untimely death of London in Bloom judge Toni Assirati, who died peacefully on Monday 4 May 2020 following a short illness. Toni joined The Royal Parks in 2004 as Head of Education and Community Engagement working across all its parks on a wide range of horticultural, community, volunteer, and education projects. Her portfolio included developing our guided walks programme, working on various play schemes, developing the volunteer strategy, and her involvement with the Isabella Plantation Access project, among many.

In 2007 I had the privilege of working closely with Toni, in partnership with the Cabinet War Rooms (CWR), when we installed our Dig for Victory Allotment in St James's Park. Toni created and managed a full-time education post for schools learning, and in conjunction with the CWR wrote and produced the first-ever teacher's pack for allotment gardening in schools. Initially a one-year project, it was such a success that it ran for three years including a birthday visit by Their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall.

Toni was forever wanting to involve children and young people, and I recall the enjoyment that was had at all the harvest festivals that Toni arranged, which later extended to the allotment at Kensington Gardens and Dwarf Orchard in Greenwich Park. My suggestion one year of us conducting a halloween event resulted in the hollowing and carving of over 200 pumpkins before displaying them, all lit, across St James's Park together with a host of ghoulish activities!

When I asked Toni if she would become a London in Bloom judge she was initially reticent, saying that she did not have the horticultural knowledge. However, the shift in direction to a community-led campaign and the newly created 'It's Your Neighbourhood' scheme made her an ideal candidate. Toni was a natural for the role with her talent for talking to people of all backgrounds, and she enjoyed her involvement, giving much-valued feedback to entries on how they could benefit from their schemes, and occasionally telling the committee what to do also!

As well as being a LIB judge and her involvement with several other organisations, she was a council member of the London Children's Flower Society. The most recent projects on which we worked together were the highly successful artist in residence project in St James's Park, entitled a 'Right Royal Buzz', and an audio tour of the park, which sadly remains unfinished.

I, together with other colleagues, continued to see Toni after she retired from The Royal Parks, our final get-together being a visit to Gunnersbury Park and Museum in 2019. Toni had been looking forward to moving back to Dorset to spend her retirement years in a part of the country she loved, before being taken poorly in February 2020. In April she was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumour and died just 12 days later, sharing her final days in the company of her family, talking, laughing, reminiscing, and enjoying the memories. I and her many friends and colleagues will fondly remember her warmth, energy, infectious enthusiasm, and her love of life. She will be dearly missed, and our thoughts go out to her family and friends.

Mark Wasilewski MVO

Park Manager, St James's Park and Co-Chairman London in Bloom