

Pub customers welcomed to their garden of delight

A Norwich pub is hoping to attract customers with an interest in plants as well as real ales – after it unveiled its £1,000 new vertical wall garden.



Heuchera obsidian, *asplenium scolopendrium*, *polystichum munitum* and *fuchsia riccartonii* are only a few of the exotic plants that make up the Whalebone's new garden.

The Magdalen Road pub is already famous for its flower displays and has won Norwich In Bloom summer competitions in 2008 and 2010.

But Steve Fiske, who manages the pub with wife Karen, said the new addition was their best idea yet, with some customers going home to plant their own versions after seeing it.

He said: "We do take a lot of care looking after the plants at the pub.

"The idea for this vertical wall garden came from the pub's owner Mike Lorenz, who spotted something similar at a pub in Kings Cross, London.

"It cost about £1,000 in total, but the regulars appreciate it, and it's a nice addition to what we believe is the best outside smoking area in Norwich."

The garden, which measures 10ft by 6ft, was designed and planted by Elizabeth Browne, a partner at Urban Jungle in Costessy, and it is claimed to be the first of its kind in licensed premises in the county.

She has fond memories of the Whalebone as a child when crisps and snacks could be bought from the pub's 'off-licence' serving hatch – in the days before 24-hour shopping. She said: "A great deal



Green space: Whalebone pub managers Steve and Karen Fiske with guests, including Norwich North MP Chloe Smith, at the opening of their wall garden. PHOTO: STEVE HOWES

of attention has gone into providing a comfortable outdoor area for smokers and non-smokers alike and to further enhance this area Steve asked us to help with the design of a vertical garden.

"As it's against the outside wall of the lounge bar, it's backed by plastic to prevent any problems with moisture seeping through. It's in quite a shady spot, being permanently under a canopy, so we had to choose shade-loving plants.

"The garden is used all year and Steve was keen for the living wall to remain evergreen and have plenty of colour all year round.

"We used three different varieties of *heuchera* plants – 'Fire

chief', 'obsidian' and 'stoplight' and *heucherella* 'kimono' and 'stoplight'.

"I put a bold diagonal line of *Carex* 'evergold', an evergreen grass that reminds me of the spider plant, through the centre of the composition."

The garden was officially opened yesterday in the presence of Norwich North MP Chloe Smith, and Julie Brociek-Coulton, secretary to the Friends of Norwich In Bloom and Sewell city councillor.

Miss Smith said: "The Whalebone is a good community pub and has won plenty of acclaim for its flower displays as well as the welcome

you get there. I'm told this new garden is one of a kind locally so it's lovely to see a Norwich pub leading the way. It's a fun honour to open it."

The Evening News has supported pubs in the city in our Love Your Local campaign.

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