

Ray Swan, Manager of the Jellicoe water gardens from 1982 – 1991, tells the story of vandalism by flower arrangers.

We got 2 trees, Blue Cedars. They cost £90 each, that's a lot of money then, all them years ago. And er, the first thing I used to do in the mornings when I got to work was just to see if everything was all in order, anything, sort of, trees fell down, anything like that. I walked along, everything was alright and when I walked back again, this blue, particular blue cedar, it was stripped of all its branches. They'd all been..cut off! I thought, oh, half an hour ago it was..lovely! so I went into the car park. that was before they built the new car park, had a look round in the cars, alright, there was a little tiny...Mini...er Traveller, I think they call it, a Mini Traveller. I looked in there and all the branches of this blue cedar were in the back of this, so I hung about, hung about, and there's two ladies come back. They come from Harpenden. Had to come all the way from Harpenden. And they'd been over the market and bought flowers, and everything, and ...

I approached them, I said ,er, "Scuse me", I said er, "in the back of your (car)", I said. "We just lost a lot of .. branches like that from a tree that's been vandalised."

They said, "Oh well, they were all on the floor. We just picked em up off the floor."

I said, "I'm sorry but, half an hour ago they were..growing". I said, "growing."

So they confessed that they had cut them, for flower arranging. (laugh) Cut em all off just for flower arranging. So, they says, "we'll pay you, we'll pay you for them."

I said "I'm sorry", I said, "you just dest.." I said "that tree will never grow again," I said, "you destroyed a tree." I said, "and I'll have to report it."

So I reported them to the town hall. And the top man in the town hall, he come to see me and he says "Thanks Ray." He says "thanks for er," he said but, he said. "Unfortunately," he said, "Unless you actually see 'em cutting 'em," he said, "if we took 'em to court, it'd be thrown out of court."

He said "I will send them a strong letter," he said. "That's all I can do."