

Plants sow seeds of hate

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city editor

A FLORAL foul-up has left a city street lined with swastika shapes in a week of major Jewish celebrations.

Gardeners hired by Melbourne City Council intended to arrange the purple and white pot plants into neat geometric shapes.

But they left six 3m garden beds along Swanston St displaying large Nazi symbols.

Jewish community representatives were appalled last night by the timing of the blunder.

City venues including Federation Square are hosting hundreds of Jews this week to celebrate the eight-day Hanukkah festival.

The council sent hired green thumbs to rearrange the six offending garden beds last night, about an hour after *Herald Sun* inquiries.

"The arrangements, even if done inadvertently, are in appalling taste," Lord Mayor John So said. "I have asked that they be changed immediately."



Bad taste: the swastika plants. Picture: ANDREW McCOLL

Vandals were initially believed to have rearranged the plants as a racist slur. But closer investigation showed gardeners had inadvertently used the pattern.

Jewish-born councillor Carl Jetter at first said he was appalled by the arrangements, which he thought were vandalism.

"It's sad and it's unnecessary. It makes

us, as an international destination, more uncomfortable," he said.

"I disagree with and don't want to see any racist activity in our city."

When told the swastikas appeared to be unintentional, Cr Jetter dismissed concerns.

"It just sounds like an accident," he said.

A spokeswoman for deputy mayor Gary

Singer, who is also Jewish, declined to make a comment.

Holocaust Museum president Shmuel Rosenkranz described the flower fiasco as offensive to most Melburnians.

"Any swastika anywhere would be of offence to anybody who lived through the Hitler era," he said.