

The Walled Garden

Newsletter of the Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden



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New Look for 2025

Welcome to the Winter issue of our quarterly newsletter on the Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden. We begin 2025 with a new look, as we now have our own logo and brand colours. Our volunteers will be easier to spot in their new branded tee-shirts, tabards and hats! We hope you like it.

In this issue we also look back on our fund-raising events and socials held over the Christmas period. There’s a reminder for Members to renew their subs and we share some gardening tips on winter pruning.

Happy reading.

Visitor Opening Hours

Open daily. Our core hours are:
Weds, Thurs, Fri and Sat – 10:00 – 13:30 hrs
Sun, Mon and Tues – 09:30 – 15:00 hrs
Groups by prior arrangement.

Festive Fund-raising

Our wreath-making workshops and craft fayres are now a regular fixture in December, providing some festive fun and raising valuable funds for the garden.

Wreath Making Workshops



Wreath-making participants in action.

We held another series of wreath making workshops in the run up to Christmas. The old Recreation Hall used in previous years was no longer available, so we were delighted that the Health Board agreed to us using Grange House as the venue.

Held over three weekends, 113 guests made 110 wreaths, and they were all different! Deep concentration was interspersed with laughter and, of course, festive mince pies.

The events raised significant funds for the ongoing development and maintenance of the garden. This would not have been possible without the huge number of unpaid hours put in by volunteers, both before and during the workshops.



Rings, ribbons and baubles were bought in as early as September. Then, in the weeks before the workshops, masses of greenery was gathered from our farms and gardens.

Rings were covered, bunches of greenery wired up, and more still laid out in trays in the polytunnel ready for our guests to use. A generous donation of variegated holly, and another of bay tree branches, added to the wide variety of greenery on offer.

Our thanks to everyone who attended and for the lovely feedback. We certainly plan to run more next Christmas. Before then we would welcome suggestions for other workshops to hold throughout 2025.

More Festive Fundraising

Our amazingly creative volunteers raised more funds for the garden through their clever crafting.

Christmas Crafts



In parallel with the wreath preparation volunteers were also busy creating a wide range of offerings for our craft fayres.

Christmas craft items made included decorations, preserves, gifts for all the family and lots more. These filled several tables at fayres held outside the Grange University Hospital and at a Llanyrafon Methodist Church community event.

Daily raffles were held at the craft events with prizes that included festive hampers and gardening gift sets.



We have also sold many jars of preserves from the costermonger's barrow in the middle of the garden.

Altogether, our Christmas fund-raising events of workshops and crafts made around £5000. All the proceeds go towards developing and maintaining the garden, so to everyone who helped achieve this, a very big THANK YOU.

A Gallery of Wreaths



A “Brand” New Image

The Walled Garden community now has its own logo.

It has long been our aim to have a logo and brand look for the Walled Garden charity. Not only to raise the profile of the charity, but also to present a more professional image. It also helps volunteers feel part

of a team and enables visitors to identify us if they have any queries.

We began the design process with a small group of garden volunteers and some help from the Communications Team at Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.

We eventually arrived at a design based on the Walled Garden gates drawn by one of our volunteers. We also received free help with type-setting and formatting from ‘ThatMediaGroup’. Our thanks to all for their contributions.



With design completed, we were able to apply for a grant from the Torfaen Community Resilience Fund. This grant is to support community groups with funding for activities, events, training, marketing and equipment up to £3,000.

We successfully applied for just over £2,000 to develop our logo, purchase branded banners, stationery items such as business cards, and a variety of clothing items for volunteers.

Criteria for the grant award included evidence of providing well-being events to improve the health of the community. We submitted advertising and photos from our 7 wreathmaking workshops and 3 craft fayres, more of which you can read about in this issue.

We would like to thank Torfaen LA’s Community Capacity Builder for his help with our grant application and to the team at Go Local in Pontypool for developing our range of products.

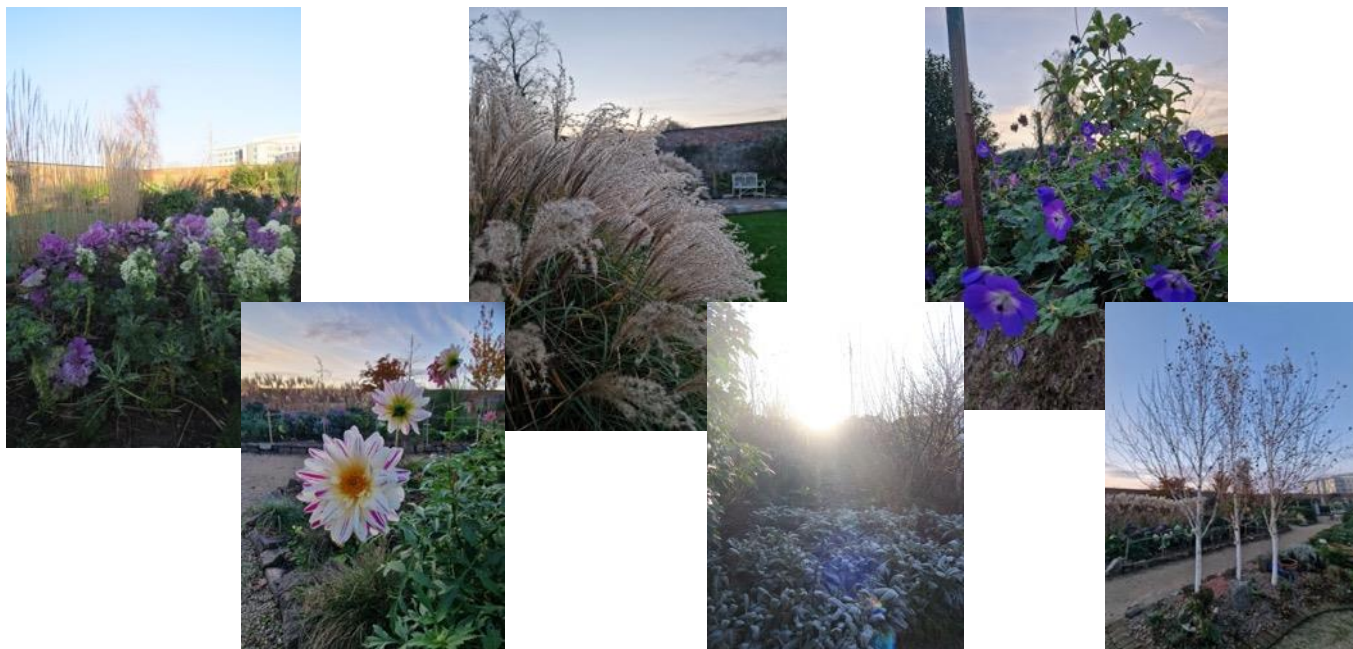


Check out our ‘models’ sporting the new gear! Visitors can also look out for new Walled Garden direction signs at the bottom of Llanfrechfa Grange drive.



The Garden Gallery

Even in winter, the garden offers interesting and beautiful vistas. Here are some photos taken in the depths of November and December.



Growing Plans for the Year Ahead

There are a few areas of the garden that will get a bit of a makeover this year.

We have plans to grow a hop and clematis over the north gate arch (the gate facing the hospital). We will continue filling out the Rainbow bed along the south wall and will review the planting in the bog garden (which has not been boggy enough so far)!

In the kitchen garden, alongside more of the old favourites, like beetroot and broccoli, we plan to grow some heritage varieties this year. We will install a couple of blueberry bushes at the polytunnel entrance and try some new fruit like cape gooseberries.



Photos by Jen Gaunt, Meg McDonald & [Élisabeth Joly](#) (Unsplash)

The Year Ahead for 2025

Key projects, growing plans, public events and social gatherings, here's a brief overview of what we hope to achieve in the year ahead.

Key Projects

Arguably our most important objective in 2025 is to get the little utility building in the Kitchen Garden refurbished. This is to provide a kitchenette and toilet for the volunteers to use.

Some work has already been done. It was re-roofed and main services reinstalled by Willmott Dixon contractors during the building of the neighbouring SSSD Unit and it was made watertight by A P Waters using grant monies last year.

The main job now is to reconfigure, decorate and furnish the interior to make it habitable. It will make a big difference to our volunteers having this available.



Repair and replacement of windows in the cottage is another key objective – more on this on page 7.

There is more hard landscaping to do in the southern half of the garden on the terrace facing the big shed.



In the opposite corner of the garden we will start thinking about some shelter, possibly either using a roof or pergola to cover the tiled seating area. We also aim to finish off its benched seating area.

And lots more...plenty to keep us busy!

The Garden Diary

Many dates are still to be finalised, but here's a first look at what's coming up...

- Planning workshop - Sun 2nd March
- Meeting of Trustees – Mon 28th April
- Have a Grow Day - Sat 7th June
- Meeting of Trustees – Mon 28th July
- Volunteer Social Gathering – July TBC
- AGM & Guest Lecture – Tue 12th Aug TBC
- Meeting of Trustees – Mon 27th Oct
- Diwali - November TBC
- Christmas Wreath Workshops – Nov/Dec TBC
- Christmas Craft Fayres – Dec TBC
- Meeting of Trustees – Mon 26th Jan 2026!

Supporting Us

There are many ways to support this important community project; volunteer, make a donation in cash or kind, or become a member. We can also apply for small grants.

Grant for Cottage Window

This year we've been fortunate to have been awarded another grant of £250 from Croesyceiliog and Llanyrafon



Community Council. This will be a big help towards the replacement of the damaged cottage window that has been boarded up for a while now.

The "cottage" was originally built to house the batteries when Grange House was fitted out with the amazing 'mod con' of electricity in the 1920s. It later became the post room

for the hospital site, but today it is leased to the Walled Garden charity as an office and storage facility.

Membership Renewals

Reminders for 2025 membership renewal have been sent out. Subs remain £5 p.a.

Thanks to all who've responded. Any members not renewed by the end of January are deemed expired. If you forgot but still want to be involved, please contact the Membership Secretary, Bobinca Wilson at info.lgh.garden@gmail.com in order to be reinstated.

Remembering Mary Berrington ... with a smile

We are sad to report that one of our most stalwart supporters, Mary Berrington, passed away in December, just a few weeks before her 97th birthday.

Mary was a lovely lady who enjoyed a long and interesting life, filled with family and friends and very many interests, skills, and crafts. She was a regular visitor to the garden and, while unable to contribute physically, she always brought a cheerful smile. She also made several generous donations, including a Nye Bevan rose, which she helped plant in the Mediterranean garden one sunny summer day. The rose will remind us of her for many years to come.

Rest in Peace Mary.



Volunteering News

Volunteering for the Walled Garden is a great way to meet people, get some fresh air and exercise, while making a positive impact on the garden's development and its enjoyment by all our visitors. Our volunteers regularly enjoy a range of social activities and recently were offered some valuable training.

Diwali Social Gathering

This annual festival of lights was celebrated on the 1st of November 2024. Diwali, or Deepavali as it is known in Southern India, is a time for sharing food and gifts with friends and family. Sundari and Suchitra organised the festivities for the garden community again this year. They helped the women dress in Saris and the men in traditional Kurtas. They also cooked and shared delicious homemade Indian food.

Traditionally celebration of Diwali is rounded off with lots of fireworks and sparklers, but in our case, we had to be content with just the sparklers!

Thanks to Sundari and Suchitra for organising a lovely spread and social.



Training for Volunteers

Recently we were offered a series of free training places organised by Torfaen Local Authority. A number of volunteers took up training on Level 2 Food and Hygiene (online) and Basic Life Support and Defibrillator training. The trainer Ben, was knowledgeable and engaging; the whole session was packed with information and provided hands on experience of using a defib machine and applying basic life support with the "Little Annie" model.

Our thanks to Torfaen LA for the training and support.

Find us on Torfaen Connect

We can now be found on Torfaen Connect, <https://connecttorfaen.org.uk>. This is an online hub for activities, support and volunteering across Torfaen.

Top Tips – Winter pruning

Continuing our series of shared learning, this issue, we share some advice about what to prune in winter and how to make it work

Deciduous woody plants, including trees, shrubs, roses and fruit often benefit from a winter pruning. Removing unhealthy wood reduces pests and diseases, and an appropriate haircut may make the plant easier to live with and more productive. As such plants are dormant and without leaves in winter, you have a clear view of their 'skeleton' and they are more amenable to losing a few limbs.

Before you collect secateurs and pruning saw, ask – is this for the benefit of the plant, its neighbours or for me? Spend a long time gazing at your victim, from all possible angles – and consider what the consequences might be of removing different bits. Most woody plants will sprout from wherever the cut is made; and the harder they are pruned, the more vigorously they will sprout (assuming they don't succumb to rank brutality). They will usually sprout from the bud nearest to the cut, in the direction in which the bud is pointing, which may influence precisely where you cut. Removal of any dead, diseased or damaged wood is always a good start.



Photo by Jakub Zerdzicki on Unsplash

Most plants will not suffer permanent damage from being pruned at the 'wrong' time of year. However, cherries and their Prunus species relatives are easily infected by various diseases if pruned while dormant - i.e. before leaf growth has started. Christopher Lloyd maintained the right time to prune most species was when you felt like it, an approach which has a good deal to recommend it.

No plant enjoys being pruned during a hard frost, and of course, plants which flower in the spring generally won't if they have been enthusiastically pruned of all potential flower buds during the previous winter!

Lavender and Cyprus Leylandii are two very common plants which generally don't sprout from 'old' wood. Care needs to be taken not to over-prune these, otherwise they can develop bundles of bare sticks. As with most evergreens, they are best pruned in spring after any danger of frost has passed.

Photo Favourite

We have some great photographers visiting the garden, many of them among our own volunteers. This lovely image is of one of the robins who have taken up residence in the garden, (often hanging out inside the greenhouse and serenading the volunteers with his song). He has become something of a mascot.

Our thanks to volunteer Doug for sharing the photo. If you have a special photo you would like to share of the Walled Garden, and you are happy for us to publish it in this newsletter, please send it to the email address below.



Photo by Doug Strachan

Contact Us

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