

The Walled Garden

Newsletter of the Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden



Autumn Leaves

Welcome to the autumn issue of our quarterly newsletter on the Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden project.

In this issue, we look back on our summer season, which turned out to be a colder and wetter affair than recent years. We have done battle with the slugs but thankfully most of our flower borders and produce have come through the worst.

A new approach to our Annual General Meeting held in September, saw the introduction of a guest horticultural lecture for attendees. It seemed to go down very well so we aim to offer this again next year.

Visit the back page for an update on our collaboration with the Welsh Society of Botanical Illustrators. Also inside, we share some top tips and an update on our different approaches to composting.

Looking ahead, our volunteers are invited to a Hindu celebration of Diwali in November and a Christmas social in December. Everyone is also busy preparing for our annual offer of Christmas wreath-making workshops and craft fayres which bring in valuable income for the running and ongoing development of the garden.

New members and volunteers are always welcome so to get involved, please contact us. Our details are on the back page.

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Around the Garden

Come for a quick stroll with us around the garden to see some autumn colour



As you enter by the north gate from Grange University Hospital and turn right, you find yourself in among winding sandy paths filled with soft sensory planting. This is the **Reflective Garden**, designed for peace and calm.

Pink nerines, purple verbena bonariensis and daisy-headed asters are providing lots of late season colour here right now.



Continuing round anti-clockwise, the lavender paths lead you across to the **Show Gardens** area, which includes the lawn, physic garden, dry garden, Japanese garden and many more interesting features.

Bright splashes of colour are to be found in the Rainbow bed and amongst the ornamental vegetables.



A useful innovation is this new bookcase, built by one of our volunteers, to display pre-loved books for sale. It's currently standing by the barrow.

Our next stop is in the **Social garden**, where we have the cottage garden, dahlia bed and Mediterranean garden.

Cheerful clumps of yellow rudbeckia line the cottage garden path, while beautiful pink dahlias are among the blooms alongside the greenhouse.



Finally, in the **Kitchen garden**, we continue to harvest the autumn produce including many different varieties of tomatoes and red hot chilli peppers.

This is just a taster, much more awaits so do visit soon. Winter is coming.



AGM and Guest Lecture 2024

The Annual General Meeting for 2023-24 was held on Monday 12th August in the Medical Education Centre in Grange University Hospital.



This year our Annual General Meeting was much enlivened by the addition of a guest speaker. We were delighted to welcome Roger Lloyd from Highfield Farm Garden. Roger has a passion for hydrangeas of every shape and hue.

Roger's talk covered the history of hydrangea cultivation at home and abroad, all the different cultivars and gave lots of useful information on growing, pruning and displaying them, while his accompanying slides showed all the myriad varieties. The audience was very appreciative.

Following Roger's talk, Jan Smith, Chair of the Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden registered charity, reflected on the progress made on the development of the garden over the last year and outlined some of the plans for the future, as set out in the latest Annual Report.

Chris Parsons, Treasurer, then ran through the financial details set out in the latest Annual Return from April 2023 to March 2024. A copy of this and the Annual Report were provided at the meeting and will also be available on our website in due course. They will be submitted to the Charity Commission later in the year.

The meeting was open to the public and attended by all the Trustees and a good turn-out of members and volunteers.



Charity Trustees for the Walled Garden at the AGM. L-R: Bobinca Wilson, Chris Parsons, Angela Fry, Jan Smith, Sundari and Jane Nehaul.

Garden Opening Hours

The garden is open to the public every day while volunteers are working in the garden. Access is via the ornamental iron gates at the north end (Grange Hospital side) and south end (Llanfrechfa Grange side).

Core opening hours are 10 a.m. to 1.30 pm, but often the garden is open either side of these times, depending on the numbers of volunteers in, which varies throughout the week.

Group visits can be accommodated by prior arrangement. Our contact details can be found on the back page.



Compost, Compost and More Compost

Gardens need a lot of compost to enrich the soil and feed all the plants. In this feature we describe how we produce our own and are starting to use some different approaches.

Photo by [Neslihan Gunaydin](#) on [Unsplash](#)



A significant amount of waste plant material is removed from across the walled garden every week. With our help, Mother Nature turns this waste into lovely compost.

Garden and other organic waste material is added to the bins following good composting practice (see our Top Tips). A fascinating and quite complex process follows, with microorganisms, worms and other little beasties breaking down the mix over several months into rich dark compost. It is then sifted ready to return to the garden beds and pots.

We have eleven large compost bins, built out of pallets, and six 'dalek' bins. While these have served us well for many years, we have recently expanded our composting methods to include a wormery and two 'hot bins'.

Hot Bins - Bill and Ben

Introducing Bill and Ben who have been added to the garden to help produce weed free seed compost. They are 'Hot Bins' about the size of a dustbin with thick polystyrene walls, floors, and lids fitted with a charcoal filter and a thermometer, and a sump to collect 'hot bin tea'. The heavily insulated construction is intended to enable an internal temperature to reach 40 to 60° C. This is needed accelerate compost production, and to kill off unwanted seeds and bacteria.

As we have two bins, we have been experimenting - with one following the rules and one acting the rebel with interesting results. To find out how they have got on and what we have learned so far, follow this link to our blog on our website: [blog post on composting](#)



Have you got Composting Worms? We have!



Armed with a donated 'Can o' Worms' composter and the purchase of a starter kit from 'Wiggly Wigglers' we have recently set up our own composting wormery.

Native composting worms aren't greedy creatures, so adding waste little and often is the way to go. But they will eat all sorts! They love fruit, especially banana skins, vegetables, cardboard, paper, bread, pasta, eggshells and even the contents of a vacuum cleaner! A neutral pH7 is the ideal environment for the worms, so very acidic waste such as onion skins and citrus peel is best avoided. It can take 6 months for the rich worm casts to be ready to harvest before the cycle is ready to start all over again.

To find out more about how it works and what you need for a successful wormery, visit our latest blog on our website, at this link: <https://llanfrechfawalledgarden.wordpress.com/2024/10/22/compost-compost-and-more-compost/>

Composting Top Tips

Here are our top tips for successful composting. Good luck!

1. Set a suitable container at least 10ft from houses and somewhere where it is easily loaded and unloaded.
2. Key ingredients of good compost are a mix of: -
 - Carbon rich 'brown' material, e.g. shredded hedge trimmings, cardboard, paper and wood ash.
 - Nitrogen rich 'green' material, e.g. deadheads and other soft plant trimmings, vegetable waste, coffee grounds and grass clippings.
 - Moisture - water
 - Oxygen – air
3. Start your bin with a layer of twiggly material to facilitate drainage and allow air to enter.
4. Then prepare your brown and green material in ratio of 50:50 to 80:20. The wetter the green material, the more brown stuff is needed.
5. Ensure your brown and green material is torn or cut up quite small. If it can't be cut with secateurs – it's too big! Mix thoroughly before tipping into your bin.
6. Spread your mixture evenly in the bin and either close the lid or cover with thick cardboard or old carpet.
7. Keep adding more until the bin is full. Then leave for several weeks, checking periodically to see if it's breaking down.
8. If the bin is 'slow' it may lack moisture and/or oxygen. Either turn the compost or empty the bin and refill, adding more material to get it going again. If it's too dry, try watering it for a few days.
9. Once 'cooked' your compost will have reduced in volume by up to 50% and will be dark brown and friable. It should smell quite earthy.
10. Sift your compost to remove any bits of twig and it's good to go!
11. If you have the room then three bins are a good plan. One being filled, one 'closed' and composting down, and the third finished and ready to empty and start again.

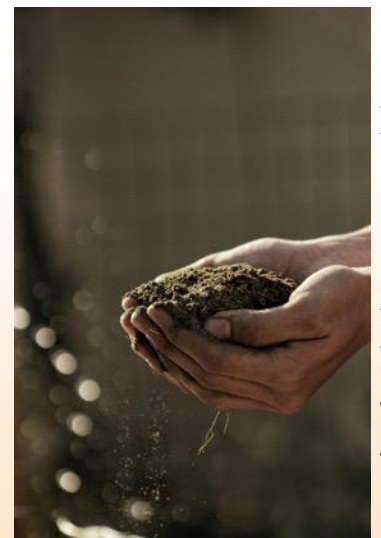


Photo by Gabriel Jimenez on Unsplash

Supporting Us

There are many ways to support this fantastic project; volunteer, become an Associate Member, donate or buy plants, produce or crafts or come along to our fund-raising events.

Volunteer ...



A warm welcome to our newest volunteers, Jen, Jane and Kath (pictured above).

Our volunteers enjoy being part of a friendly, supportive community, nurtured by our volunteering secretary, Sundari. If you are over 18 and independent, we can always find jobs, even if you know nothing about gardening.

For more information please contact Sundari at email: grangegardensundariu@gmail.com

Donations

We also welcome donations. Cash is good but we are also happy to receive things like spare seeds, plants or gardening tools. As an example, we have just received lots of baby cacti from visitor Paul, which we have potted up into different containers for selling. These will raise valuable funds for the garden project.

Thanks Paul and everyone else who has donated items.

...or Become a Member

Can't volunteer but still want to support the project and follow our progress? Then please consider becoming an Associate Member. It costs just £5 per year with renewals every January. As an Associate Member you will:

- Receive our quarterly newsletters by email
- Have access to the 'Members only' section of our website providing more detailed information on the progress of the garden and learning resources.
- Get "Early bird" invitations to events at the garden, such as Open Days and workshops.
- Be supporting a worthwhile project which is proving to be so beneficial to staff, patients and their relatives and the local community.

Membership renewals are due at the end of December, so existing members will soon receive a reminder invitation from our membership Secretary Bobinca Wilson.

For more information about our membership, please email us at : info.lgh.garden@gmail.com





Garden Events



Activities planned for the coming weeks

What

When

Where

Diwali Celebration

A social gathering for our regular volunteers

Fri 1st November
16:00 – 18:30 hrs

Committee Room, Grange House, Llanfrechfa Grange

Christmas Wreath Making Workshops

£32.50 per person
Price includes all materials, tuition and light refreshments

Sat 30th November
Sun 1st December

Committee Room, Grange House, Llanfrechfa Grange, NP44 8YN



Sat 7th December
Sun 8th December

10:00 -12:00 or 13:30 -15:30



Christmas Craft Fayres

Pop up stall selling a range of Christmas gifts, decorations and preserves. There will also be a raffle each day.

Tue 26th November
Sun 1st December
Tue 3rd December

Outside entrance to Grange University Hospital

All 10:00 – 14:00

Cash only preferred.

Christmas Social

Social gathering for our regular volunteers

Weds 11th December
16:00 – 18:30 hrs

Foyer and Committee Room, Grange House, Llanfrechfa Grange, NP44 8YN



Botanical Art at the Grange



The Welsh Society of Botanical Illustrators (WSBI) have been busy drawing and painting in the garden over the last year. Their aim is to produce a directory of plants (called a Floralegium) of many of the plants growing in the Walled Garden. So far, they have produced around 20 beautiful works of art based on the plants in the physic garden. These include rosemary, evening primrose, borage (starflower), quince, digitalis (foxglove) and many others.

Now thanks to a collaboration with Gwent Arts in Health, there is an exhibition of this work on display on the ground floor corridor of Grange University Hospital for visitors to enjoy. It is expected to run at least until the end of October, so do go and see it if you can.

Contact Us



Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden,
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Email: info.lgh.garden@gmail.com

Website: <https://llanfrechfawalledgarden.wordpress.com/>



Or find us on Facebook at Llanfrechfa grange walled garden