AUTUMN 2026

The Walled Garden

Newsletter of the Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden







Welcome

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

We've enjoyed a bit of an Indian summer this autumn with some lovely warm sunny days and the garden has responded in kind. It was especially welcome for our October events which helped bring in lots of visitors.

We held our first Harvest event in October in partnership with Root for our Future. It was a really fun day, which we hope to repeat next year.

Our Annual General Meeting was held on 4th October, followed by a wonderful talk on the renovation of another Walled Garden in Monmouthshire. It was good to compare and contrast our experiences. These guest lectures are free to our Associate Members, which serves as a timely reminder that renewals will be due at the end of December. The annual fee remains just £6. Details on how to renew will be sent out by email shortly.

Read on for more about what's happening in the Walled Garden and how you can get involved. We hope you enjoy reading these newsletters and welcome feedback and suggestions for future issues. As always, our contact details are on the back page.

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Around the Garden

As the days grow shorter and leaves turn to pink and gold, autumn arrives in the garden. The Reflective Garden still offers splashes of colour, while the Kitchen Garden yields the last of the season's harvest.





After an extremely dry summer the **Reflective Garden** has bounced back and put on a wonderful show of nerines. They have been in the ground for a few years now and have really come into their own this autumn.

We have spent the last few weeks renovating the borders next to the poly tunnel. This has involved us digging up and splitting the day lilies in that border and replanting them, a tough task indeed. Hopefully this will improve their flowering next year and the cull has provided us with lots of spare plants for selling next year.





In the **Kitchen Garden** we have enjoyed some great harvests over the growing season; fennel succeeding for the first time, lots of beans, beets, brassicas and tomatoes. The final pickings include our squash, now 'curing' in the greenhouse. (See our 'Top tips' in this issue for more on how to grow them).

We still have a few crops to see us over the colder months; parsnips, leeks, Brussel sprouts and kale. The polytunnel has been cleared of tomato and pepper plants and replaced with winter salad crops of hardy lettuces, mustard, rocket and lamb's lettuce.







There is still work to do. We have planted garlic and broad beans outside but the remainder of the veg beds will be cleared, weeded and mulched to prepare the soil for next spring when sowing gets started again in earnest.





Around the Garden

While the northern parts of the garden are pretty well established, we continue to develop the borders and hard landscaping in the southern half. Here's a flavour of what's been done and what's still to do.



The plants in the **Mediterranean garden** flourished throughout the summer and in this warm autumn, including our yucca gloriosa, which is still sending up flower stems.



This year we planted Mirabilis Jalopa, commonly called the 4 o'clock plant because the flowers open in the late afternoon and have a beautiful scent in the evening.

Originally from Central and South America, it grows well in a mediterranean type climate. Often treated as an annual, it self-seeds prolifically, producing trumpet-shaped flowers in shades of pink, yellow, white and sometimes striped or marbled.

Work continues on the flooring for the **Upper Terrace** with its balustrade wall, which will be completed with paviors.

We have started to make some changes to the **Cottage Garden** too.



Some plants have become a little overcrowded so will be cut back, thinned out or removed to improve access. New plants are to be added and we have installed an attractive new bird feeder.

The Ericaceous border has continued to develop except for our acer, which suffered in the heat. We added a mulch of sheep's wool which hopefully has prevented its demise.



At the end of this border, the fig bush has provided an abundant crop of tasty figs. Together with our other fig tree, we have had so many figs our members have been able to make delicacies like fig and quince jam and fig and frangipane tart.



The Dahlia border

Our tubers suffered in the extreme weather and were slow to develop but we have had numerous blooms in the last few months. We also grew dwarf dahlias from seed and these added more colour.





Around the Garden

Last but not least, here are a few other developments around the garden.



Work to revamp the **Wildlife garden** continues; sowing seeds, cutting back some of the overgrown climbers and moving taller plants to the back.

At the front of the border, we have planted Welsh wild daffodils, crocus, more violets and Welsh yellow poppy seeds. The middle of the border has been planted with foxgloves, wild cornflowers and literally thousands of papaver somniferum (opium) poppy seeds which we hope will give us a wonderful display next year. We have also added a new stepping stone path.

The **Rainbow border** has undergone a change with many new plants added, including over 300 bulbs, mainly tulips, in the colours of the rainbow. Some blue hyacinth and muscari have been added to the blue section as blue tulips are not available. Look out for a riot of colour in the late spring.

The **Nursery** revamp has been completed. New staging and shading have been invaluable over the very hot, dry summer.

We also have 5 nursery beds in which we keep stock plants, which we split and pot on for sale. Currently we have potted on hardy geraniums, hostas and geums.





Garden Opening Times and Group Visits

We are open to the public every day between 10 a.m. - 1.30 p.m., often longer, depending on the numbers of volunteers in, which varies throughout the week.

Group visits, outside of these core hours, can be accommodated by prior arrangement. For example, in October, we were pleased to welcome walkers from the Newport Outdoor Group who, for a small donation, combined a walk from Cwmbran to Ponthir and Llanfrechfa, with a guided tour of the Walled Garden followed by tea and biscuits.

Visitors can support the garden project by buying plants and seasonal fruit and veg from us. We also have a secondhand book stand and often have a supply of jams, chutneys, locally produced honey and eggs (see details on back page). All proceeds go towards the ongoing development and upkeep of the garden.

Trustees Update

Here's the latest news from the meetings of the Trustees who run the registered charity, 'Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden'.

AGM and Guest Lecture





Our AGM was held on 4th October in Grange House, Llanfrechfa Grange. It was well attended by volunteers, members and a few members of the public, some of whom subsequently joined as members – welcome!

The event was opened by our Chair, Jan Smith, MBE, who gave a run through of the Annual Report for the charity, setting out our key achievements in the year 2025/26 and plans for this year. This was followed by Chris Parsons, Treasurer, who presented the financial report and advised that the charity remains in a solid financial position.

Copies of the Annual Report and the Financial Return will be filed with the Charity Commission in due course and will also be published on our website.

After concluding the business element of the event, Jan welcomed Kathryn Owen, Head Gardener at the Blackbrook Estate near Monmouth and 'Gardening in the Border' gardening courses.

Kathryn gave a wonderful talk about how the Walled Garden and its environs have been restored over the last 30 years from a sheep field to the beautiful private gardens of today with its colourful borders, yew hedges, rose parterre and Victorian greenhouses.

Our audience was very engaged and asked lots of questions. We were also very interested to compare notes of their journey at Blackbrook and our own. We are hoping to organise a group visit next year.

Meetings of the Trustees

The latest meeting of the Trustees was held on 28th October. The volunteer representative was Marianne Larcombe.

There was a big agenda to get through, as always, including a review of the finances, reporting of accidents and incidents, building and maintenance plans, events and updates on volunteering and membership issues.

Marianne brought some suggestions from volunteers which included a request for the chairs in the greenhouse to be reviewed. We have bought 6 new perching stools as a result and all seem pleased with them.



Minutes from the meeting will be posted on the shed noticeboard and on the Members' pages at our website.

The next meeting is on **18th January 2027** and the volunteer rep will be Kath Hampton. Volunteers – please use the Suggestion box in the greenhouse for Kath to bring, but please be clear what you want to raise and how you want it resolved. Some past comments have been a bit too cryptic to decipher!

A Celebration of the Autumn Harvest

In partnership with the Cwmbran-based Root for our Future team, we held our first Harvest Celebration event on 17th October.











We welcomed lots of visitors to our first Harvest Celebration event run in partnership with Cwmbran-based Root for our Future.

The aim of the event was to celebrate home grown and locally produced food and to share lots of different ways of using it.

We had a good range of stalls offering demonstrations and tasters including dehydration methods, fermented foods, fresh fruit and veg, apple pressing and home- made preserves of jams, jellies, compotes, relishes and chutneys.

We also demonstrated how to save money on plants by seed saving and propagating from the ones already in your growing space.

Gwent bee-keepers came along to talk about where honey comes from and how to get started.



ROOT FOR OUR FUTURE

Our refreshment stall kept the theme going with a selection of delicious bakes made with vegetables from the garden; beetroot brownies, cakes made with courgettes, carrots, apples and even more radical – mangelwurzel muffins and Welsh-cakes made with leeks and cheese!

Free recipe cards were given out to encourage people to try these at home.





Everyone had a lot of fun and we raised £1,000 for the Walled Garden from sales of plants, produce and refreshments.

Our thanks to everyone who supported us. We would certainly like to run this event again next year, so watch this space!

Top Tips – Growing and Harvesting Squash

We grow a lot of different pumpkins and squash in the Walled Garden.
Here are our top tips for growing and harvesting winter squash.







Winter squashes are related to pumpkins and courgettes, collectively known as cucurbits. All have similar soil requirements.

Varieties we have grown in the Walled garden include Butternut Squash, Turks Turban (very ornamental), Sweet Dumpling, Anna Swartz, Crown Prince and Marina di Chioggia, (an Italian heirloom variety).

Get started in spring.

- Sow seeds indoors and plant out after the danger of frost has passed.
- It's best to grow them in the ground as they like a lot of space although there are varieties that are compact, like the bush butternut squash.
- They like moist but not water-logged soil. Mulch to preserve moisture and incorporate plenty of manure or suitable organic matter as they are greedy plants.
- Feed with potash-rich fertiliser to encourage fruit to form and thin out some shoots to encourage existing fruit growth.
- To test if they are ready to harvest:
    - Tap the squash, it should sound hollow when it's ripe
    - Stem should be hard, dry and woody
    - Press your fingernail into the flesh. There should be no "give".





- Pick before any frost, cutting from the main stem not the stalk.
- Once picked, allow them to ripen fully and 'cure' in the autumn sun, ideally in a greenhouse. This will firm up the skin and ensure they store well.
- Store in a cool but dry location and enjoy eating them up until the end of March.



Volunteering News

Volunteering for the Walled Garden is a great way to get out of doors, make friends and to be part of a fantastic project that benefits lots of people in the community.

New Recruits



Our newest recruit is bringing some youthful energy to the garden. Cian Pattimore is 15 yrs old and is a year 11 pupil at Croesyceiliog Comprehensive School.

Normally we only take volunteers over the age of 18, but as part of his bronze Duke of Edinburgh award, Cian has to volunteer somewhere for 3 months and we are delighted to be able to help. Cian is being supervised by his grandma who's one of our regular volunteers, for his Walled Garden assignment. For his first day on the job, he helped to tidy up the Wildlife Garden and install some stepping stones.

If you would like to volunteer with us, please contact Sundari at email: grangegardensundariu@gmail.com

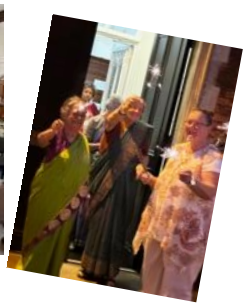


Festive Celebrations

Our volunteers were once again treated to a tasty Indian feast to celebrate the Hindu festival of Diwali on 1st November. Our thanks to Sundari and Suchitra for their fantastic cooking.







With so much going on in the run up to Christmas, we have decided to hold our festive social gathering in the New Year. It will be on **Sat 9th January 12:30-14:30 in Grange House** with a hot finger buffet. This is a chance for all our volunteers to catch up with everyone from across the week and welcome our newest recruits.

We hope day teams will also take some time out to celebrate Christmas together in the garden, with a selection of nice nibbles and hot drinks.



Training Courses

We are looking to offer some useful training for volunteers in the New Year. One course will be First Aid. It would be good to have a few people from across the week to be first aiders. We will also be offering a Basic Food Hygiene course for those who haven't yet done it and like to make cakes or preserves for the garden.

Both will be online courses that can be done from the comfort of home. For more information, please contact Jane Nehaul at our gmail: info.lgh.garden@gmail.com

Wreath-making Workshops

Places on our ever-popular Christmas wreath-making workshops are selling fast. The first weekend is sold out but there are still some places left on the 5th December. Booking details below.

Christmas Wreath Making Workshops

Committee Room, Grange House
Llanfrechfa Grange, NP44 8YN

November / December 2026	
Sat 28th Nov	SOLD OUT
Sun 29th Nov	SOLD OUT
Sat 5th Dec	10.30 - 12.30 13.30 - 15.30
Sun 6th Dec	SOLD OUT

£35.00 per person

to include all materials, tutoring, light refreshments, and all round good fun

e-mail info.lgh.garden@gmail.com to book your place(s)

If booking a group please provide everyone's names.
Payment info will be sent with your confirmation e-mail.
Do allow enough time to visit the garden before or after your workshop.

All proceeds in aid of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden, Registered Charity 1176172

Jam Jamboree







An abundance of raspberries, gooseberries, figs and blackcurrants from the Walled Garden has gone into making lots of jam, and our glut of tomatoes has been made into red and green tomato chutneys. We also have damson, blackberry and apple, plum, grape and mixed fruit jams made from other local garden gluts. For the first time we have experimented with a quince compote and jellies from quince, apple and blackberry, and crab apple.

All these are for sale in the garden at the moment. So much to choose from! They make great Christmas presents especially as our gift-wrapped variety packs will be on sale soon, from the garden and at our Christmas events.

Contact Us

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Or find us on Facebook at llanfrechfa grange walled garden

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