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The Walled Garden

Newsletter of the Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden



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Welcome to Spring

Welcome to the spring 2026 issue of our newsletter.

We open this edition with a walk around each quadrant of the garden to update our supporters on how it's looking right now and what we are working on. There's also news on volunteering activities and the work of our Trustees.

As the days get longer and warmer we are getting busier with visitors and events, working with new partners to bring in visitors and to promote gardening activities. Visit our spring diary on p. 9 to find out what's coming up.

It's Hedgehog Awareness Week from 3-9th May, so to do our bit, our top tips in this issue are on how to look after these delightful visitors to our gardens.

If you would like to get more involved, or support us in other ways, do get in touch. We also welcome feedback on this newsletter and what you would like to read about. Our contact details are on the back page.



Around the Garden

Join us for a stroll around the spring garden to see what's sprouting, what's blooming and what's going on.



Clockwise: Primroses and hellebores in the birch tree bed. Viburnum Carlcephalum in the Reflective garden and Clematis Francis Riva by the north gate.

We start our walk in the **Reflective Garden**, which is in the northwest quadrant. An abundance of pretty spring flowers are in bloom with primroses, hellebores, muscari and early flowering clematis putting on a beautiful display.

It's a busy time here as it is an ideal time to split and replant many of the border perennials, such as blue lily turf, carex and black mondo grass in the Cornus border. Some have been replanted, the remainder will be sold later. The Cornus border has had its spring prune, with stems being cut right back almost to ground level. This seems drastic, but is essential to ensure bright, colourful stems next winter.

Our star shrubs at this time of year, are the viburnums and lilacs. One of the best is Viburnum Carlcephalum, or 'Fragrant snowballs.' It has beautiful white/pink flowers that fill the air with an amazing perfume.

Continuing round clockwise, we come to the **Culinary Herb Garden** and the **Kitchen Garden**.

A cut flower bed is the latest addition to the north end of the herb garden.

Behind the polytunnel, we have already sown our first early potatoes and garlic, including Elephant garlic this year (bigger and milder bulbs). We have also sown or planted out under fleece, second early potatoes, broad beans, beetroot, turnips, parsnips and salad leaves.

In the polytunnel, our new heated propagators are working hard bringing on lots of flowers and vegetables for the whole garden.

The winter salads have done well through the colder months but are now coming out to make way for the next season of veg. The polytunnel will be home to lots of tomatoes, as well as bottle gourds, peppers and aubergines throughout the summer.

In the meantime, we are continuing to harvest purple sprouting broccoli and rhubarb from the outside beds and tomato plants are ready for selling.



Above: Overgrown winter salads in the polytunnel. R: Daffodils in the herb garden.

Around the Garden

We continue clockwise around the south part of the garden.

In the **Social Garden quadrant**, the greenhouse has had its spring clean and is now a hive of activity. At this time of year, seeds and young plants needing heat are started off in new propagators in the polytunnel. They are then moved on to the greenhouse to continue growing until large and strong enough to plant out. Some of the plants will be grown on in a cut flower border. Others will be used for making up hanging baskets and sets of bedding and vegetable plants for selling towards the end of May, early June.



Right: In the **Cottage garden**, we have this beautiful Magnolia just coming in to flower.



Left: Meanwhile this gorgeous camellia has been in full bloom in the **Japanese Garden**.



In the **Show Gardens quadrant**, several changes are planned for this summer.

The **Rainbow border** (above) is undergoing a revamp to enhance all the colours of the rainbow with new planting. An attractive brick edging has also been added to give definition to the border.

Some of the Miscanthus grasses adjacent to the lawn have become extremely big so are being thinned out. We will find new homes or sell some of the divided plants.

A donation of several very big logs means that we can improve the look of our **Stumpery**, replacing some of the old rotting stumps. Look out for these new additions!

In the **Nursery**, outside the south gate, we are currently painting our newly constructed nursery tables. Hopefully everything will be ready for the summer, when we will have lots of plants for sale.



New Events for 2026

With the welcome advent of longer, warmer days, we began our calendar of activities for 2026 with some new events. These brought in some new visitors to the garden as well as our regulars.



St David's Day Celebration

We held our first St Davids Day celebration on March 1st.

'Do the Little Things" said St David in 589 BCE, so we did. Homemade Welsh cakes, some cooked on-site, and buttered Bara Brith were served with hot drinks from tables adorned with our unique Welsh flag.

Volunteers dressed in traditional costume and activities for children were all part of the fun.

Members of the Gwent Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers added a woolly magic to the event.

Thanks to all who came along to support the day. We plan to do it all again next year.



New Horticultural Workshops with Dean Peckett

Perennial borders and plant supports were the topic for a chilly morning at the end of March, at a workshop provided by local horticulturalist Dean Peckett.

Dean kept his audience engaged as he covered border design and plant selection, caring for them throughout the seasons; and dividing mature specimens to gain new stock.



He then gave a demonstration on how to make plant supports using hazel whips. The dome he created will soon be smothered by the perennial sweet peas he kindly donated to the garden.

Coffee and cake with a demonstration of tool maintenance rounded off an interesting and most informative session.

Dean will be back to lead another workshop on growing your own vegetables on 16th May. See page 9 for more details.

Volunteering News

Our great team of volunteers regularly show up, fair weather or foul, to keep the garden in great shape.

Welcome Newbies



Welcome to our newest recruits, Pauline, Ralph and Neil.

We have volunteers in every day of the week. They undertake a wide range of gardening tasks or help with landscaping.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer with us, please contact our volunteering secretary, Sundari at grangegardensundari@gmail.com

Branded Clothing

Last year, our volunteers were offered 3 free items of branded clothing; a t-shirt, tabard or hi-viz vest; a cap or beanie; and a fleece. These were in navy, green or grey, depending on the item, all with the charity logo printed or embroidered on them.

The uptake was around 80 – 90% and feedback on quality was good. Our visitors can now more easily identify a volunteer if they have questions or comments to make.

We are about to place a repeat order for our newest recruits but any volunteer wanting to buy extra items of clothing at cost price can contact Bobinca Wilson, Membership Secretary, to have them added to the order.

Fermentation Workshop

In our latest collaboration with Torfaen based 'Root for our Future' project, a number of our volunteers learned all about how to reduce food waste by using fermentation processes to preserve a wide range of vegetables.



Our teacher, Amelia, began with the history and science behind different fermentation methods, such as kefir, kimchi, sauerkraut, sourdough and kombucha. Then it was down to business as everyone was given a cabbage to shred, add salt then time to get squeezing. It was interesting and a lot of fun. At the end of the session, everyone went home with their own jar of homemade sauerkraut.

Our thanks to Amelia and all the team at Root for our Future for all their hard work. For more info about the project, visit their website at: <https://climateactiontorfaen.cymru/spring-fermentation...>



Trustees' Update

The Walled Garden is run by a registered charity with 6 volunteer Trustees. In this update, we report on some of the key actions going on behind the scenes to keep everything running smoothly.

Meetings of the Trustees

Approved Minutes of the meetings can be viewed by Members on our website (see link on back page) and are also on the noticeboard in the main shed.

Dates for 2026 are:

Mon 20th April

Mon 27th July

Mon 19th October



Partnership Meeting with the Health Board

The next meeting with our landlord, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, has been rescheduled for 7th May. Key issues for discussion will be:

- Extending our lease to include use of the compound area.
- Update from planning re whether we can have a Victorian lean-to greenhouse in kitchen garden along the east wall.
- Works & Estates help with connecting services to the Utility block.
- Support from the Communications team for promoting garden activities.

We are pleased to report that they have agreed to the erection of 2 more shelters in the garden, one in the corner of the Reflective garden and one between the stumpery and lawn.

Root and Branch Review

It's been 8 and a half years since we registered with the Charity Commission, and a great deal has changed in that time. Trustees have agreed that 2026 is the right moment to review our constitution and how we operate in delivering our objectives.

Our core aim—to provide an uplifting green space for the benefit of all—remains unchanged.

As the organisation has grown, including an increasing number of active volunteers, our policies and procedures need to evolve. Areas under review include health and safety, event management, financial processes, and the acceptance of gifts.

By documenting how we operate, we aim to establish clear guidelines for our existing teams and to support future leadership.



Supporting Us

There are a number of ways individuals can help support the Walled Garden; become a volunteer, become an associate member, donate, attend one of our public events or workshops or buy plants or produce.



Donations

We welcome donations to support the garden's development. There are various ways our supporters can do this:

- Place cash in one of the honesty boxes in the Walled Garden or hand to a Trustee on site.
- See a Trustee or volunteer on-site to make a payment by credit or debit card on our Sum Up card reader.
- Cheques should be made payable to 'Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden' – our postal address is on the back page.
- Bank transfer – please email us for our bank details.

We also sell plants and produce on-site with payment options as above.

Become a Member

In March, our membership cohort reached just over 100 members, which is a great start to 2026 for the Charity. The annual subscription of £6 provides us with a reliable income which helps with the running costs of the garden.

Benefits of membership include:

- Quarterly newsletters.
- A 'Members only' section of our website.
- Priority invitations to our events
- A way of providing tangible support for the Walled Garden.

If you are not yet a member and would like to join, membership forms are available at the Garden or via our website, at this link: <https://llanfrechfawalledgarden.wordpress.com/supporting-us/online-associate-membership-application-form/>



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.



Top Tips – Hedgehog Awareness

Do you have hedgehogs in your garden? If it's a little overgrown with a few untidy shrubby areas, the chances are you might! It's Hedgehog Awareness Week 3rd – 9th May, so here are our top tips for looking after our gardeners' friends.

Rarely seen, but you will know if you have them as they leave 'presents' (easily mistaken for those of a small dog!) and you may hear snuffling, chinking and crunching noises late at night as they investigate around flowerpots for a snack. If you're very lucky, you may get a nest in a secluded spot. Take care with emptying compost bins in the summer, or if you come across a big clump of dried leaves and grass.



- They need a hole about 5" / 13cm square in the bottom of fencing, walls etc, to enable them to wander off to find enough food – they can travel 1 mile in a night.
- They eat a wide range of 'food' – beetles, grubs, slugs, the odd baby rodent or bird's egg, but they appreciate a snack of kitten biscuits or meaty cat food – never bread and milk (it upsets their stomachs badly!).
- They also need a good supply of fresh water – you'll know when they've drunk out of a dish, as it will be all muddy.
- If you have a pond, please make sure they can scramble out – they are good swimmers, but can drown if they fall in and can't get out again.
- Strimmers and bonfires are two of the biggest causes of injuries in hedgehogs, apart from motor vehicles. Please always check long grass or a bonfire before you start work – the hedgehog's reaction to danger is to curl up in a ball: which works fine for a curious fox, but not for a strimmer cord or fire.

- Pea and bean nets are also a hazard if too low on the ground.
- If you find a lethargic hedgehog out during the day, it may need help. One busily looking for food or collecting nesting material is usually ok. A sick hedgehog should be put in a box, with a dish of water and an improvised hot water bottle if it's cold – put hot water in a drinks bottle, wrapped up in a towel to avoid burns.

The British Hedgehog Preservation Society has a lot of useful advice and information on their website, and some cute hedgehog related merchandise.

They also have a network of volunteers who are trained to look after sick and injured hedgehogs – their central telephone number can put you in touch with someone in your area who may be able to help or at least give good advice. Telephone **01584 890 801**.



www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk

Garden Events Calendar

Here are our upcoming events in the Walled Garden this spring and summer.

Date	Time	Event
Sat 25 th April	10:00-12:00	Art in the Garden – with Ceridwen Powell. Free drop-in class open to all.
Sat 16 th May	10:00-12:30	Vegetable Gardening Workshop – with Dean Peckett. See advert below for details including how to book. Costs £30 pp with part proceeds going to the Walled Garden.
Sat 30 th May	10:00-12:00	Art in the Garden – with Ceridwen Powell. Free drop-in class open to all.
Sat 6 th June	10:00-16:00	Have a Grow Day – with Social Farms & Gardens. Join us once again for this national celebration of community growing. Plants, propagation and produce plus lots of fun activities for all the family. Free entry.
Sat 27 th June	10:00-12:00	Art in the Garden – with Ceridwen Powell. Free drop-in class open to all.
Sat 18 th July	12:30-14:30	Volunteers Summer Social Gathering – An opportunity for our regular volunteers to come together for good food and company as a thank you from the Trustees.
TBC July	TBC	Foraging Workshop – with Root for our Future. Watch this space for more details.



THE VEGETABLE GARDENING WORKSHOP

Join Dean Peckett for a demonstration on all things Vegetable Gardening including crop selections, seed sowing, planting, plant supports, 'No Dig' composts, green manures, mulching, tools and equipment, crop harvesting and organic pest controls.

Workshop Details

Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden
Cwmbran, NP44 8YN

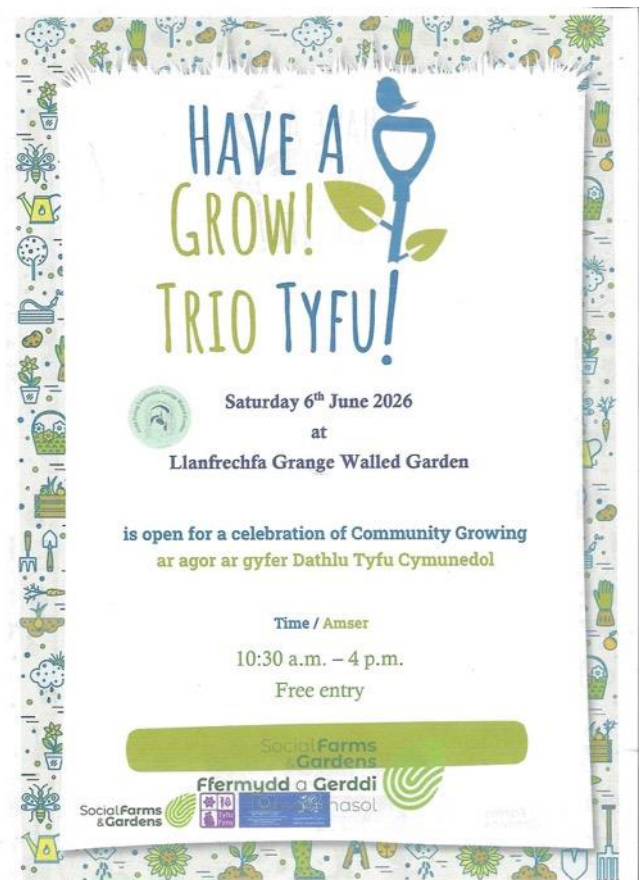
Saturday 16th May 2026
10:00am - 12:30pm

Tickets: £30

To learn more about the workshop or book a place, please contact Dean directly:

Telephone: 07802 262313

Email: info@djggardenadvisory.co.uk

HAVE A GROW! TRIO TYFU!

Saturday 6th June 2026
at
Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden

is open for a celebration of Community Growing
ar agor ar gyfer Dathlu Tyfu Cymunedol

Time / Amser
10:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Free entry

Social Farms & Gardens
Ffermudd o Gerdidi
Cymunedol

Tale of the lost Great White Cherry



The Great White Cherry (*Prunus Tai-Haku*) in our Japanese garden, is a spectacular sight when it's in full bloom at this time of year. It's a tree with an interesting history.

In 1926, an English botanist and world authority on Japanese cherries, called Captain Collingwood Ingram, was invited to a conference on cherries in Japan. He was shown a painting of a cherry tree with a very large white flower, which was reported to be extinct in Japan.



Collingwood Ingram 1905 by Ernest & Verman Pollard, Public Domain

Then in 1926, he found a single, but rather sad specimen, growing in a Sussex garden that had been grown from a cutting in Japan in the late 19th century. He was able to take cuttings from this tree and reintroduced it to Japan in 1932. He named it Tai Haku. The gardening world named him "Cherry Ingram"!

Contact Us

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Or on Facebook at Llanfrechfa grange walled garden



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