

# The Walled Garden

Newsletter of the Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden



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## Happy New Year 2026

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

We begin 2026 with a walk around the winter garden to update you on landscaping developments and what's growing and still looking good.

We also look back on our fund-raising, visits and socials events held over the Christmas period. There's a reminder for Members to renew their subs and we share some gardening tips on early seed sowing under glass.

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.



## Around the Garden

*It is time to take our readers on a wander around the garden to show you what's going on, what's looking good and what's planned over the coming weeks and months. We will begin in the kitchen garden and go around clockwise.*



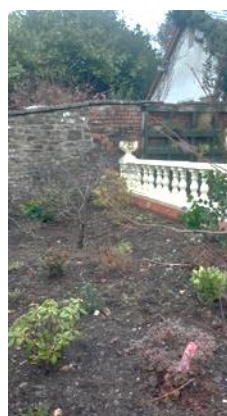
Not much grows between Christmas and the end of February. Garlic and broad beans were planted out in the **Kitchen garden** in November and are doing well. We have grown winter salad crops again in the polytunnel but this year also tried pak choi and kohlrabi. They have done really well and the pak choi has been popular with volunteers.

Outside we are trialing green manures, i.e. phacelia and clover, in the north bed. They are sown as ground cover over winter and then we will dig them in at springtime to increase soil fertility.

Compost bins outside the east gate are gradually being rebuilt or refurbished.

Meanwhile, restoring the utility block in the corner to provide a kitchen and toilet for our volunteers is proving an on-going challenge! Much has been done, we've rectified internal walls, rewired and installed some kitchen cabinets. The plumbing still needs sorting, but our biggest problem is the roof that still lets in water despite extensive repair work. We will get there eventually!

In the **Social garden**, past the greenhouse and shed, the Upper Terrace is progressing well. The low curved wall forming one side of the ramp which will lead to a new seating area looks quite elegant.



Work is in progress on marking out the base of the other side of the ramp and preparation has included chipping off cement on reclaimed pillars and capping stones.

The garden area in front of the balustrade wall has been turned into an attractive border with a variety of ericaceous plants including camellias, dwarf rhododendrums, azaleas, skimmia, heathers and gazanias in the balustrade urns. A large, beautiful donated acer is an added bonus. All plants have settled well.

## Around the garden

*Continuing clockwise around the garden, we take in the show gardens, lawn, nursery and the Reflective quadrant.*



The large miscanthus grasses around the edge of the lawn have just been cut back.



The mahonia bush in the **Rainbow border** is doing well. Some revamping of this area is planned.

The **nursery** revamp has had to take a bit of a back seat over the winter as we focused on preparation and planning for our wreath making workshops. However, we continue to pot up perennials and cuttings for the nursery ready for sale in the spring and summer.



As in other areas of the garden, winter is a fairly quiet time in the **Reflective Garden**. However, like the rest of the garden, the weeds are still growing, just a bit slower. We still have plenty of tidying up to do along the paths and borders. We leave some seed heads and other ragged looking foliage as food and cover for birds and wildlife. We try to stay off the frozen ground in the borders in the cold weather, to avoid compacting the soil.



In the last couple of years, we planted some Cornus to provide winter colour. They certainly add some welcome structure and brightness during the colder months.

# Festive Fund-raising

**Over 100 people came along to our Christmas wreath making workshops this year. Everyone created something unique and beautiful to take home and had lots of fun in the process. It also raised valuable funds for the Walled Garden.**



Preparation for our ever-popular Christmas wreath workshops began in October tying bows, wiring baubles, and advertising. Throughout November conifer was used to cover 120 wire rings, and a wide range of other greenery was gathered from local farms and gardens, and prepared in readiness for building wreaths.

The workshops were held in Grange House, a beautiful and elegant setting appreciated by all. Guests busied themselves choosing different shades of green and yellow foliage to adorn their wreaths and adding baubles, fir-cones, holly berries or spangles to augment their creations.

There was a lovely buzz in the house with the usual beverages augmented by mulled wine or hot chocolate. The mince pies and other nibbles were also well received.



Christmas Crafts were also available again this year with lots of lovely gift ideas created by our talented volunteers. These included peg bags, meditation cushions, toys, table arrangements, and home-made jams to name but a few.



Thanks to the hard work of our volunteers, all workshops ran smoothly, and the house was left spick and span. The donated materials, together with the hours of work given freely by our volunteers meant we were able to add around £3000 to the garden's coffers. A great result.

As for the wreaths .... they were beautifully crafted, by both new and seasoned attendees. They seem to get better every year! Well done to everyone and thanks to all for supporting us.



## School Visitors – start ‘em young

*We were delighted to host a couple of primary school visits in early December. We hope we have inspired a future generation of gardeners.*



Our visitors are getting younger! On two consecutive weeks we were delighted to welcome 28 pupils and teachers from Years 2 and 3 from Coed Eva Primary School.

The school is planning to create its own gardening area and came to look around the Walled Garden for some inspiration and ideas. They were also treated to a bug hunt game that involved searching for a number of painted pebbles hidden around the garden. Judging by the shouts and squeals that filled the air, they all had a terrific time, despite the awful weather.

We had an enthusiastic response when we suggested they return in the spring or summer to see the garden looking at its best. Let's hope we have inspired the next generation of Monty Dons and Carol Kleins!

## Trustees' Update

***The charity is administered by 6 volunteer Trustees. There is a lot that they do behind the scenes to keep the garden development on track, the funds flowing and to look after our members and volunteers.***

### Membership renewals

The recruitment and support of our members is overseen by our Membership Secretary, Bobinca Wilson. Renewals are due at the end of December every year so she has recently contacted everyone to remind them and to advise that the fee has gone up to £6 this year. Many people have already renewed but she has sent a further reminder for anyone who has not yet responded.

If you have any questions about your membership or would like to sign up as a new member, you can contact her at email [info.lgh.garden@gmail.com](mailto:info.lgh.garden@gmail.com)

### Grants and Donations

In December we were pleased to receive a grant for £275 from Llanyravon and Croesyceiliog Community Council. This is ear-marked for replacement gazebos.

We have also recently received a donation of £1000 from the Friends of Llanyravon Manor. This was a huge surprise and we are very grateful.



### Trustee Meetings 2026

The trustees meet every quarter in Jan, April, July and October. The next meeting will be Mon 20<sup>th</sup> April. An extra meeting has been convened on 12<sup>th</sup> Feb to review the charity constitution and policies and procedures.

Minutes of meetings and highlight reports are published to the Members Only part of our website. Copies are also put up on the noticeboard in the shed for volunteers to view.

## Annual Report Submission

Our Annual Report and Financial Return for 2024-5 has recently been submitted to the Charity Commission for England and Wales. A copy can be downloaded at this link.

[FOLGWG Annual Report 2024-25.pdf](#)

# Volunteering Update

***Volunteering at this time of year has a different focus. There is less emphasis on gardening and more time spent on planning, tidying up and helping out at events and also time for social gatherings.***

## Christmas Social Gathering

Volunteers gathered in the Walled Garden on Sat 16<sup>th</sup> December for our annual Christmas Social. This was an opportunity to meet up with friends who work on other days, get to know new faces and have fun.

A scavenger hunt was provided to keep people moving and stop them getting cold. Teams of 3 or 4 had to scour the garden for items on a quiz sheet and take photos of their finds as evidence. The quiz was timed to make it that little bit more challenging! It was a great way for volunteers to see the garden with fresh eyes and some genuinely made new discoveries, like the fish motif etched on one of the walls by a previous occupant of the garden (see below).

The event then moved to the warmth of Grange House, where a lovely lunch buffet was laid on by the charity Trustees.

It finished off with a toast of non-alcoholic fizz to our volunteers thanking them for all their hard work.



## Can you help? Poster designs

We are fortunate to have lots of volunteers helping out in the garden but we also need help in areas such as communications, social media and organising events.

Right now, we would love to hear from anyone who is good at making posters. We need posters for key events such as our 'Have a Grow' day, Christmas wreath workshops and so on. We would also like some banner signs about the Walled Garden to encourage patients and visitors to pop over from the hospital and others to promote membership and volunteering. If you think you could help, please drop a line to our General Secretary, Angela Fry, for an informal chat at email: [info.lgh.garden@gmail.com](mailto:info.lgh.garden@gmail.com)



## Volunteer Representation

Last year volunteers began to send along a nominated representative to the Trustee meetings. Ceridwen Powell attended the January meeting. Marie Swidenbank will be coming to the next one in April. Volunteers can contact her about any issues or concerns to be raised, via WhatsApp or mobile (details in shed).

# The Garden Diary

Date	Time	Venue	Event
Feb 19 <sup>th</sup>	6 – 7.30 pm	Fairhill Methodist Church & Community Garden, Cwmbran	<b>Fix Food, Fix the Planet</b> Free public talk on the UK food system by Sue Pritchard, CEO of Food, Farming & Countryside Commission. To book a place email: <a href="mailto:hello@climateactiontorfaen.cymru">hello@climateactiontorfaen.cymru</a>
March 1st	11 am – 1.30 pm	Walled Garden	<b>St David's Day Celebration</b> Join us for tea/coffee and Welsh cakes in the garden on Wales's special day. Some volunteers will be dressed in national costume. Visitors, especially children, are encouraged to do so too. A small charge will be made for refreshments.
March 23rd	2.30 pm	Aneurin Bevan Uni Health Board HQ	<b>Partnership Meeting with ABUHB</b> Bi-annual update meeting between Trustees and the Health Board CEO and Head of Communications.
March 28 <sup>th</sup>	10 am – 12.30	Walled Garden	<b>Plant Staking &amp; Perennial Borders Workshop with Dean Peckett</b> See advert below for details and how to book. Cost £30 pp with part proceeds going to the Walled Garden.
April 25 <sup>th</sup>	2 – 4 pm	Fairhill Methodist Church & Community Garden, Cwmbran	<b>Spring Seed Growing Workshop</b> Free workshop open to everyone by 'Root for our Future' project in Cwmbran. To book a place email: <a href="mailto:hello@climateactiontorfaen.cymru">hello@climateactiontorfaen.cymru</a>



**PLANT STAKING & PERENNIAL BORDERS WORKSHOP**

With Spring approaching, join Dean Peckett for a demonstration on how to construct perennial plant supports for herbaceous perennials using hazel and artificial plant support materials. Learn how to build a hazel dome plant support to train roses, sweet peas and annual climbers.

During the workshop, Dean will demonstrate how to divide perennial plants and advise on perennial plant selection, border design, plant care and annual maintenance.

## Workshop Details

Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden  
Cwmbran, NP44 8YN

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March  
10:00am - 12:30pm

Tickets: £30

To learn more about the workshop, book a place, and make payment, please contact Dean directly:

Telephone: 07802 262313

Email: [info@djpgardenadvisory.co.uk](mailto:info@djpgardenadvisory.co.uk)



## Top Tips – Multi-seed sowing in modules

***Multi-seed sowing in modules is a great way to maximise your growing space, whether it's a greenhouse or windowsill. Works well for veg and seeds with erratic germination. Here are our top tips for how to do it.***

With this method plants are not pricked out but go straight into the ground when they have good root balls. As plants grow, they will push themselves out to make room for themselves, e.g. beetroot. As you harvest the largest ones, the smaller ones use the space to grow on.



### You will need:

- Small module containers 3-4 cm cells or small pots.
- Multipurpose compost (because seeds stay in cells until ready to plant out, they need more nutrients than seed compost).
- Soaking tray, filled with water
- Plant labels
- Seeds

### Next Steps

1. Fill module cells generously with compost and press down with 2 fingers to firm but not compact the soil, then top up with more compost. Plants like firm soil and this will make them easier to remove later.
2. Place container in a soaking tray for a few minutes until the surface glistens. Lift out, drain, then make a small depression, fingernail deep, in each cell.
3. Pop 3-5 seeds into each cell (better too shallow than too deep). Cover lightly with more compost and gently firm. Sprinkle lightly with water.
4. Label with plant name, variety, date sown and number of seeds per cell.
5. Put tray in a warm place, away from drafts, e.g. window sill, propagator or cupboard.
6. Check daily for signs of germination. You should not need to water them unless tray is very warm or germination takes longer than 5-7 days.
7. As soon as seedlings appear, move them into good light to prevent them growing leggy. (Many seeds don't need light to germinate but do for growing on).
8. Plant out once seedlings have a good root system and several "true" leaves.

You can start growing a few veg from the middle of February with this method. We usually start with true spinach, beetroot and radish. Good luck.

# Snowdrops - the first flowers of the New Year

Here are some of our snowdrops, the first flowers to appear after New Year. Native to the UK, Europe and parts of Asia, they grow from a little bulb in cool, moist conditions and have a natural antifreeze in their cells that protects them from the frost and snow.

Back in Victorian times, the appearance of a single snowdrop foretold a death and it was considered unlucky to bring them into the house! Nowadays, we all love to see the first flush of these delicate and pretty flowers. Their Greek name 'Galanthus' means milk flower and they are considered symbols of spring, purity and new beginnings. They also have another interesting and positive attribute; they contain a substance called Galantamine which is used to treat Alzheimer's Disease.



## Contact Us

Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden,  
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