

The Walled Garden

Newsletter of the Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden



A Bumper Crop

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

The summer was long, hot and dry, which proved a challenge to keep up with watering needs but the garden repaid us with glorious displays and an abundance of produce. It was great to see so many visitors enjoying the space and even hospital staff holding their meetings outside.

Our Annual General Meeting was held in August on a blistering hot day, cooled down with a guest lecture on Winter Gardening!

In this issue we also report on an exciting new collaboration with Climate Action Torfaen's "Root for our Future" project. The team are offering interesting learning opportunities on sustainable food growing systems and kicked off with a workshop on composting for our volunteers.

Read on for more about what's happening in the Walled Garden and how you can get involved. As always, our contact details are on the back page.

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Around the Garden

At the north end of the garden, where you enter from Grange University Hospital, we have the Reflective Garden, designed for peace and calm and our Kitchen Garden, where we grow most of our fruit and veg.



In the **Kitchen Garden** we have enjoyed bumper crops of fruit and veg, especially runner beans, sweetcorn, peaches, pears, figs and some enormous onions and parsnips.

The Reflective Garden still has plenty of autumn colour, with flowers such as nerines, Michaelmas daisies and various hardy geraniums.

It is really maturing now and many plants are outgrowing their space or swamping their neighbours. This has required a reassessment of the area, resulting in us moving plants to more appropriate places.

We have also divided plants such as hardy geraniums, campanula, primroses, Geum and Astrantia, which we have potted on for sale or for replanting elsewhere.

Some new shrubs and perennials have been planted out while the soil is still warm including hardy salvias, fuchsias and hebe.

General maintenance is ongoing, our battle with weeds never stops. Shrubs in this area need pruning at different times of the year depending on their individual needs. This autumn we have been pruning escallonia and rosemary and finishing any remaining pruning of lavender before winter, as new growth could be affected by frosts.

However, our star performer this year has been the Bottle Gourd or Calabash.

This is a popular vegetable in Asia due its mild taste and ability to take on flavours of the dish.

They come in all shapes and sizes and in India, are often seen sprawling on thatched roofs. It is easy to grow, vigorous but needs managing in smaller spaces. We grew just ONE plant in the polytunnel and look how big it got!



We grew a variety called *Lagenaria siceraria*. It rewarded us with 9 huge gourds which were popular with visitors who snapped a bargain. We may grow it again next year as it certainly earned its keep but next time, we could try a different shaped bottle gourd.

Around the Garden

Continue round to the South part of the garden, for the Show Gardens, lawn and other feature areas. While watering over the summer has been a challenge, many areas have benefited from the lovely sunshine.



As summer segues into autumn the dahlia bed is eye catching with many decorative blooms including new cacti and pom pom varieties.

Plants in the Japanese Garden have thrived putting on impressive growth spurts this year.

The step over pears, planted in 2024 along the edge of the ornamental vegetable plot, produced seven very sweet pears this year, while the grapevine on the pergola provided an abundance of sweet grapes. These delicious treats were enjoyed by our volunteers.



The tree fern in the stumpery continues to flourish and has begun to make a real impact during the summer. It has also now been carefully wrapped up to protect it from the cold and wet of winter.

The **Nursery**, outside the south gate, is where we care for and propagate plants for sale and planting out in the garden. Over the autumn we have divided geums, thrift and hardy geraniums from the beds.



We've also planted out some hardy and borderline salvias that were kindly donated to us. We will be watching the weather over the winter and will give our salvias extra protection if frosts are forecast.



We achieved a warm tropical look either side of the steps in the Mediterranean garden with the banana, yucca, euphorbias and palms. These are now under cover in the polytunnel for winter.

AGM and Guest Lecture 2025

The Annual General Meeting for 2024-25 was held on Monday 12th August in the Committee Room of Grange House, Llanfrechfa Grange.



Following the success of our guest lecture last year, we were delighted to provide another for this year's Annual General Meeting. Dean Peckett is a local garden designer and horticulturalist with many years of experience working for the RHS and other important gardens. The title of his talk was "The Winter Garden – a walk-through winter into spring".

The AGM was opened by Jane Nehaul, our Vice Chair, who introduced fellow Trustees and Dean and welcomed over 30 attendees. An overview of the past year's successes and challenges was given by Angela Fry, General Secretary. She thanked all the supporters of the Walled Garden project and especially all the volunteers who work so hard to provide such a beautiful and uplifting facility.

Chris Parsons, Treasurer, then ran through the financial details set out in the latest Annual Return from April 2024 to March 2025. 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 floor was then handed over to Dean. His talk on winter gardening was a cooling distraction from the searing heat of the August weather outside! He showed many beautiful examples of how trees and shrubs chosen for their winter colour and form can provide interest throughout the bleak and barren months, creating new vistas when mist, frost or snow cover them. Attendees went home inspired and with many useful ideas to put into practice.

Our thanks to Dean and everyone who attended.



Staff Meetings – let's do it outdoors!

A mix up over room bookings in Grange House brought a group of Occupational Therapists to the garden looking for somewhere to hold their professional development workshop. We provided tables and chairs, that together with ample sunshine turned potential chaos to calm and the group enjoyed a productive and successful afternoon.



Working Together for a Sustainable Future

We have a new venture working alongside Climate Action Torfaen to engage, educate and support individuals who want to contribute to biodiversity and a greener and more sustainable way of living in the local community.

Root for our Future with Climate Action Torfaen



Climate Action Torfaen is a dedicated and passionate local community group focused on providing practical advice to help people make lifestyle changes that will help deliver climate change.

This year they won a National Lottery grant for a new project called "Root for our Future" aimed at developing skills in sustainable food systems such as composting, growing fruit and vegetables, food preservation techniques and No Dig gardening. They are delivering workshops around the County and have a website of learning resources to share knowledge and expertise.

After contacting us, Trustees and volunteers met their team to discuss how we could work together. The result is they have agreed to deliver a series of free workshops for our volunteers, with us also hosting places for members of the public. There will be a range of topics over the coming year, the first being on composting in November (see next article). We hope these will prove interesting and enjoyable and are looking forward to this joint venture.



Composting Workshop

Our first workshop with the 'Root for our Future' team was on composting. Our volunteers learnt what compost is, how it is formed and how it benefits the garden. Tamara provided lots of useful tips on how to make good compost and the different types of composting systems.

This was supplemented by a demo from Amelia, on the use of Bokashi bins for handling food waste that includes items not normally suitable for composting.



We were delighted to receive 2 Bokashi bins and starter mix for the Walled Garden to try out.

You can read more about the workshop and composting tips at this link,

<https://climateactiontorfaen.cymru/composting-workshop-at-llanfrechfa-grange-walled-garden>

Thanks to Tamara, Amelia and Rhiannon for an interesting session and to everyone who attended.

Top Tips – Water Propagation

You can continue to grow your plant stock over winter using the water propagation method. Here are our top tips for achieving success.

This method can be done all year round, especially for indoor plants, but you do need to take care in winter to protect them from too much cold and any frost. We are currently propagating spider plants, tradescantia, hydrangea, salvia and penstemon in water. Others that work well include coleus and fuchsia.



- Take the cutting just below a node and remove any leaves that would sit in the water.
- Place in a glass jar tall and narrow enough to allow the stems to stand upright. Too wide and the cuttings will float around and get waterlogged. Using a glass container also makes it easier to spot when the roots come through.
- Fill the container with dechlorinated water (e.g. let tap water sit for 24 hours). Pop in your cuttings.
- Change the water every 3–5 days.
- Place in bright, indirect light but avoid anywhere draughty. After 2–4 weeks, you'll see roots! Cooler temperatures in winter will slow things down so be patient if your plants take longer to root. They'll come through eventually.
- Once you have roots, you can pot them up or keep them growing in water.

Good luck and happy gardening!

Japanese Cherries Standing Tall

Plants in the Japanese Garden have thrived this year, with all having put on impressive growth spurts.

The Great White Cherry tree (*Prunus Taihaku*) now has a girth of 50cm. Its companion, the *Prunus Kanzan* is even wider at 53cm while the *Prunus Shirofugen* is a smaller 30cm. However, they have all made big increases from the 14cm waistlines they had when planted in January 2022!

They are providing a glorious show of autumn colour right now.



Volunteering News

Our volunteers are essential to the success of the Walled Garden. We always need more people and with many different skills. Please get in touch if you'd like to get involved.

Welcome Newbies



A warm welcome to our newest volunteers, Caroline, Lesley and Piotr (pictured above). Caroline comes in on Mondays and Tuesdays, while Lesley and Piotr come on Wednesdays. Do look out for them and say hello.

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

Christmas Cheer

Our Christmas Social will be lunch in Grange House or the garden on **Sat 13th December**. This is a chance for all our volunteers to catch up with everyone from across the week and welcome our newest recruits. There will be nice nibbles, mince pies and optional games to keep us all jolly and warm.



Can you help?

Calling anyone out there with landscaping software, CAD or good draughtmanship skills! Can you spare some of your time and expertise to help us please?

We would really like to produce an up-to-date diagram showing the garden layout as it is today. Our original technical plan was drawn for us by the hospital contractor architects for outline planning permission based on early concepts for the layout. The garden has moved on a lot since then.

We would like something colourful, user-friendly and in a format that we can reproduce across our publications and social media. It doesn't have to be exact, just be accurate enough to help visitors find their way and encourage them to explore.

If you think you could help, please contact our General Secretary, Angela Fry, for a chat, on ange.wallgrdn@yahoo.com

Membership Update

Our membership cohort is regularly reaching over 100 members a year, providing a valuable income stream while keeping supporters informed and up to date.

Many of our members are also volunteers, but others come from far and wide. It is very encouraging knowing that we have such great support out in the wider community. The subscriptions provide us with a reliable income stream which helps with the running costs of the garden. In addition, membership numbers may help us with grant applications.

We last increased our membership fee in 2022, but with costs rising, we have decided it is time to make a slight increase. For 2026 it will go up by £1 to £6 per annum.

We hope you agree that this still represents very good value as there are such benefits in being an Associate Member:

- Members are sent the quarterly newsletters straight to their inbox.
- There is a Members only section of the website which gives access to more detailed information on the progress of the garden, such as minutes of meetings, design updates and learning resources.
- Members get early bird invitations to events and workshops such as 'Have a Grow' day in summer and wreath workshops before Christmas. We are planning more workshops in 2026 with information sent to members before advertising to enable priority booking.
- Your subscriptions are supporting a project which is proving very beneficial to staff, patients, visitors and the local Community.



Renewals for 2026

If you are already a member, a reminder about renewal for 2026 will be sent at the end of December.

If you are not yet a member and would like to support us, membership forms are available in person at the Garden, or you can email us at; info.lgh.garden@gmail.com

You can also apply online using this link to our application form;
<https://form.jotform.com/200202780825346>
 or via our website;
<https://llanfrechfawalledgarden.wordpress.com>



Bobinca Wilson, Membership Secretary

Garden Fundraising

**We are running our popular Christmas wreath-making workshops again this year.
Please see details below on how to book. Hurry, places are selling fast!**



Christmas Wreath Making Workshops



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



November / December 2025

Sat 29 th Nov	13.30 - 15.30
Sun 30 th Nov	10.30 - 12.30 13.30 - 15.30
Sat 6 th Dec	10.30 - 12.30 13.30 - 15.30
Sun 7 th Dec	10.30 - 12.30 13.30 - 15.30

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)

**Please provide the names of everyone you are booking a place for.
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



Garden Opening Times



We are open to the public every day between 10 a.m. - 1.30 pm, 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.

We have lots of seating around the garden, along with a few little tables and picnic benches.

Visitors can buy plants and seasonal fruit and veg from the barrow in the central circle and our nursery. We also have a secondhand book stand. All proceeds go towards the ongoing development and upkeep of the garden. Ask a volunteer if you'd like to buy jams, chutneys, honey or eggs.

Contact Us

Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden,
Llanfrechfa Grange,
Cwmbran,
Torfaen,
NP44 8YN

Email: info.lgh.garden@gmail.com

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



Or find us on Facebook at llanfrechfa grange walled garden



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