

The Walled Garden

Newsletter of the Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden



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New Ventures in 2021

Welcome to the first issue of our newsletter for 2021. Well it has certainly been the most challenging winter we have experienced so far. The weather has been very wet at times and more recently cold and snowy. The pandemic has meant we have had to be very careful about how many people we could allow in to work in the garden at any one time and of course the need for social distancing has made it more difficult to get some tasks done. Despite all of this, a huge amount has been achieved, both in terms of upkeep and maintenance but also in delivering the landscape design.

In this issue we describe some new areas in more detail, namely the Japanese garden and the lawns for the southwest quadrant. We are also embarking on an innovative new way of organic vegetable growing using the No Dig method, under the watchful eye of No Dig expert, Cherry Taylor.

If you are interested in helping out, as a volunteer gardener or in an associated capacity, please read on for more details. Our contact details can be found on the back page.

Access and Volunteering News

What have our volunteers been up to and how are we managing during the pandemic?

Volunteering and our COVID plan



The Walled garden development relies solely on the good will and help from very committed and dedicated volunteers. During the lock down period, we have relied on them to help us continue essential maintenance in the garden. Initially we had a daily rota of just 4 people at a time, to ensure social distancing, but this has now been raised to 6 per half a day. There are strict hygiene measures in place and written guidelines for COVID-19 safety.

We have 18 regular volunteers who are engaged in activities across all parts of the garden; building the Japanese Garden, participating in the No Dig organic vegetable course, plant sowing and propagation, procuring stones and other materials from various sites for hard landscaping and planting our spring bulbs. You can read more about these in the following pages.

The garden work has progressed with the tireless input from our volunteers in all weather. The more vulnerable volunteers have sensibly stayed away from the garden including some who have to provide care for vulnerable family members. Keeping the garden open for essential work has however, provided many of our volunteers with a sense of purpose and improved mental wellbeing during the lockdown.



The lawn area design - SW quadrant

Opening Date Deferred

Our original plan was to formally open the Walled Garden to the public in spring 2021 to coincide with, what was then going to be, the opening date for the new Grange University Hospital. As we are all only too aware, a great deal has happened since then due to the pandemic. The new hospital opened early and as things currently stand, we are likely to remain in some degree of Lockdown for several more months to come. It is with great sadness therefore that the Trustees have decided that opening must be deferred until it is safe to do so. We remain hopeful that this will be early summer time in 2021.



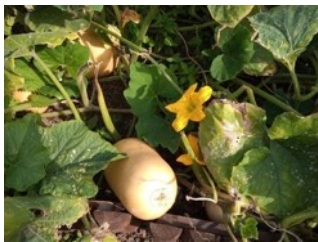
New Project - "No Dig" Organic Vegetables

New for 2021, we are delighted to have been given a complimentary place as a Community Garden participant in the No Dig organic vegetable growing course run by [Veg Out](#) co-founder and organic market gardener Cherry Taylor.

Between January and June 2021, we will be guided through the process of growing 15 types of vegetables using Charles Dowding's No Dig and organic methods. The deal is that we share our learning with our members and volunteers and help to raise awareness of the benefits of organic growing using the No Dig method, which we are, of course, very happy to do.

During the course we will learn how to:

- Make No Dig beds or convert existing ones
- Deal with pests and weeds without using chemicals
- Sow and prick out at the optimum time for each vegetable
- Plant at the appropriate spacings
- Nurture, harvest and store our own lovely fresh organic veg



How will we do this, especially with the limitations imposed by the pandemic restrictions?

The course is being run via a private social media group hosted by Cherry on Facebook and weekly group Zoom lessons. This is all supplemented with hand out notes, YouTube video demonstrations and group chats. All the seeds have been provided by the course so that everyone grows the same things at the same time alongside Cherry, in their own vegetable plots, be that back garden, allotment, school or community garden. We have allocated a bed 1m x 5m in our Produce Garden in the northeast quadrant of the Walled Garden for this purpose (Bed #3).



#3 'No Dig bed' in the NEQ and the seeds we will be growing throughout the course.

Our lead for the course is our Trustee Secretary, Angela Fry. She will attend all the lessons and guide interested members and volunteers who want to share our learning from the course. We will share regular updates on our progress via our main website pages and Facebook. You can also send us questions to raise with the No Dig community about the method.

Please contact us at info.lgh.garden@gmail.com for more information.



The Japanese Garden

Inspired by traditional Japanese garden design principles, one of our first "Show" gardens is being built in the Southwest quadrant.

Traditional Japanese garden design principles aim to use natural materials and to incorporate simplicity, flow and a sense of serenity. Our garden will be similarly understated and asymmetrical with clean lines and subdued, natural colours and textures. Smooth rocks and stones will be laid in a serpentine pattern to suggest water with carefully placed bigger rocks and stones intended to symbolise eternity, stability and harmony. Stepping stones will encourage a visit to a quiet stone bench or to view our traditional granite lantern up close.

Three cherry trees are already in place and we plan to add a range of other Japanese style plants in spring.

A bamboo fence will provide privacy to the northern side of the garden and a moon gate a welcoming entrance near the lawn area.



Above: Concept design drawing for the Japanese garden.



Left: A simple stone bridge crossing over our dry river bed. Made from what might have been heavy window ledges or lintels that we found buried in the garden.



Alan from A P Waters skillfully manouvered two enormous granite stones over the wall using his remote control hyab. The stones, donated by homeowner Tom Gooding of Abergavenny, were collected by Alan last year and have been sat outside waiting for their new home to be ready.

Right: Our simple granite bench has been built from spare kerb stones salvaged from the new hospital building site. It will eventually be sheltered by an open mock 'tea house' where visitors can sit quietly and watch over the garden.



A beautiful 5ft tall Kasuga Nara lantern, funded by the Monmouthshire Building Society Charitable Foundation, is under construction. Hand carved from silver-grey granite the name of this ornate lantern comes from the ancient Kasuga Grand Shrine in Nara, Japan. The lanterns were traditionally used as temple guardians. One face of the intricately carved light box bears an image of a sacred Japanese native Sika deer while the top resembles a lotus blossom, the flower of paradise and a symbol of purity.



The Community Garden Circular Lawn

A circular lawn bounded by beautiful ornamental grasses is to be a key feature for the Community Garden in the southwest quadrant.

Preparing the lawn area required many weeks of weeding, raking and leveling the ground but finally the day came when the grass could be put in. The lawn is fast emerging, but as you can see, so also are the molehills!

The next task is to plant the edging. We have selected three beautiful ornamental grasses; *Miscanthus Nepalensis*, *Miscanthus Sinensis* "Starlight" and *Miscanthus Sinensis* "Kleine Silberspinne". Each border will be between 9 and 13m long with an opening between each one to provide access onto the lawn.



Above - the lawn area, before and after planting



Clockwise from top left - *Miscanthus Nepalensis*, *Miscanthus Sinensis* "Starlight" and *Miscanthus Sinensis* "Kleine Silberspinne"

The ornamental grasses are deciduous perennials that will grow up to about 1m tall and provide changing colour and texture through the seasons. The lawn area has been part funded by Ponthir Community Council. A lawnmower has also been donated by one of our supporters!

The Chamomile Lawn

The Community garden in the southwest quadrant is going to be home to a number of different 'show' gardens. As featured above, these include a Japanese Garden and a circular lawn. There will also be a shrubbery, a stumpery and bog area, a wildlife garden, scree and physic gardens. We will share more on these in future issues.

Beneath two of the three ornamental cherry trees, we will be planting a second, smaller lawn, this one planted with chamomile. This is not the sort of chamomile you make tea with but a special variety that is low growing, low maintenance and non-flowering. It is however beautiful to look at and also fragrant.



Chamomile nobile "Treneague".

Membership News

Recruiting members to our Registered Charity brings important benefits to the Walled Garden and is a great way for people to show their support and get involved.

As a Registered Charity, having a support network of Associate Members is very useful for the project.

Benefits for the Charity include:

- providing us with a small but reliable income from subscriptions, which helps with the running costs of the garden.
- increasing the range and size of grants we can apply for.
- Feedback and input from members helps the Trustees know if they are guiding the project in the right direction.

There are also benefits in becoming an Associate Member:

- Members are sent quarterly newsletters.
- There is a Members only section of our website which gives access to more detailed information on the progress of the garden, our new seed swap scheme (see below) and shared learning from the Charity's participation in the 2021 'No Dig' organic growing course.
- Share benefits of Walled Garden affiliations such as Social Farms and Gardens.
- Invitations to social and other events at the garden.



The best part is – membership is such good value! All of the above for only £4 a year!

So do, please, show us your support. We now have an electronic membership form on our website:

<https://llanfrechfawalledgarden.wordpress.com> Or email Membership Secretary: info.lgh.garden@gmail.com

Subscriptions can be paid by cash, cheque or bank transfer (see membership form for details).

We look forward to hearing from you soon!

Seed Swap Scheme

We have set up a new seed swap scheme to encourage the sharing of any spare seed and to recycle our own surpluses. The scheme is operated from within the garden so for now is only open to our members and regular volunteers.

Seeds for swapping are listed in the 'Members Area' of our website. The seeds are stored in a marked air-tight container in the greenhouse. New donations should be deposited in a separate marked bag for checking in what we can use and what to allocate to the seed swap. Anyone who wants to take from the swap bucket just needs to jot down what they have taken.

Don't have any swaps to donate? That's fine. Perhaps pledge to grow a couple of extra plants for us to sell or leave a small donation instead. For more information please visit the Members area of the website.



News in Brief



Making Leaf Mould

The trees around Grange House drop a huge volume of leaves in the autumn. While these can be a nuisance underfoot they are perfect for making leaf mould. Loosely packed into two bespoke bins the leaves will be broken down by the slow action of fungi, rather than by bacteria that decompose other compost bin ingredients, and will be ready for mulching or potting on next autumn.



New composting bins from salvaged pallets

Our Annual Report 2019-20

The Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden Annual Report, which includes our annual financial return for 2019/20, has recently been submitted to The Charity Commission for England & Wales. It can be viewed at The Charity Commission's website at this link: <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/5108442>

Grants and Donations

The Japanese Garden has again benefited from the help of Adrian Waters and also received two generous donations. Adrian hoisted two enormous granite stones over the wall into the garden; The Soroptimists Club of Cwmbran has funded one of the cherry trees to commemorate the centenary of Soroptimists International; and the Monmouthshire Building Society Charitable Foundation has funded our granite lantern.

We have also received 8 bare root fruit trees from Keep Wales Tidy as part of our 2021 application for the Green Flag Community Award. These include 2 Victoria plum and 3 types of apple tree.

Once again we are delighted to have been granted funding from our two local Community Councils. The Llanyravon and Croesyceiliog CC grant will help fund the stumpery plants and the grant from Ponthir CC will be used for the Physic Garden.

Spring Raffle Cancelled

We are sorry to report that the spring raffle organised by the Newport Uskmouth Rotary Club will not be taking place this year, due to the difficulties around coordinating this during the COVID crisis. This event normally raises over £150 for the Walled Garden so it will be missed. We hope it will be back next spring.



And now here come the Daffodils...



And now here come the daffodils,
 The trumpeters of spring,
 All tooting joy, which thrills and thrills,
 The while again they bring
 Their happiest note attuned with cheer
 To tell that spring is truly here.

I am always glad when daffodils
 Lift up their golden horn,
 To wake a day whose waking fills
 With mellowness the morn,
 And lures the south winds thru the air
 To bear away my winter's care.



Daffodils *(excerpt) by Charles A Heath*

Spring is coming and just to make sure no-one misses it, our volunteers have been busy planting up all sorts of spring flowering bulbs all over the garden to bring some much needed colour and joy in the coming months. We will have many different varieties of daffodils, crocus, tulips, muscari, fritillaries, anemones and snowdrops, which we hope are going to result in a riot of colour. Our thanks to all our volunteers for their hard work, we will be sure to share pictures in our next issue.

Contact Us

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