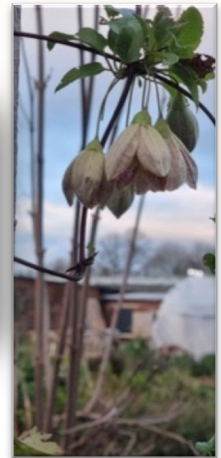


The Walled Garden

Newsletter of the Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden



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A New Chapter

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

It proved to be a very busy time in the run up to Christmas as many of our volunteers got crafting to generate funds for the garden. However we did manage to find time for fun as well.

Since the New Year, the focus has shifted to preparing the flower and veg beds for the 2022 planting plans and finishing as much of the hard landscaping as we can in readiness for opening to the public.

We are also delighted to report the achievement of another key milestone. We now have a 10 year lease on the garden which replaces the licence arrangement we have had to date with our landlord Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. This puts the project on a much more robust and secure footing as we move forward to a new chapter when we formally open in the spring.

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.

Getting Crafty

The Walled Garden was a hive of industry in the run up to Christmas as volunteers got crafting to generate funds from pop up craft stalls and wreath-making workshops.



Volunteers ran a craft stall and wreath making class at the Billy Bob Christmas Craft Fayre in Llangibby.

Christmas Craft Fayres

This winter our options for running any indoor events were severely limited by the ongoing COVID restrictions. So we were very grateful when a group of our volunteers suggested running a Christmas craft stall at a range of venues across Gwent.

The crafters then set to work making a wide range of Christmas table and hanging decorations, wreaths, gift sets and many other items, which they then sold at a number of events. These included stalls outside Grange University Hospital, outside the Health Board HQ at St Cadoc's Hospital, Llanfrechfa Grange and the Billy Bob Christmas Fayre at Llangibby. At Billy Bob's they even laid on some wreath making classes.



Wreath Making Classes

This year we ran a series of wreath making classes in the Walled Garden's large greenhouse. These were supervised by our green-fingered volunteers working with small pre-booked groups of 2-4 people. It proved very popular so we will definitely be looking at doing this again next year.



Altogether the craft fayres and wreath making sessions raised over £1200 for the Walled Garden project - what a fantastic result!

We would like to extend our warm thanks to everyone who contributed and made this venture such a success.



Christmas in the Garden

A jolly time was served up in December when volunteers all got together for our annual Christmas party.



Our volunteers work tirelessly throughout the year to bring the garden to life. We now operate a rota so different people come in on different days. As the saying goes *"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy"*, so it is of course really important that our hard-working volunteers down tools occasionally and can come together for a bit of a knees up.

Our Christmas party was held outside in the garden in order to keep everyone COVID safe. However we made sure no-one got too cold by laying on a range of fun activities to warm the muscles and keep the little grey cells firing. There was croquet on the lawn and boules on the terrace, while the Christmas picture quiz was craftily set up to send participants on a hunt for clues around the four quarters of the garden.

For elevenes the revellers enjoyed an aperitif of mulled apple juice or marshmallow topped hot chocolate. Then a soup lunch was served, made from our own grown veg with freshly baked bread made by our volunteers. To finish off, tea and coffee with homemade cakes and the obligatory mince pies.

A good time was had by all!



Garden Design Update

Moving round the garden anticlockwise, here is a brief update on the garden design implementation and planting plans for the year ahead.

The Reflective Garden (NW)

The entry points to this part of the garden were originally planted with sky rocket firs but sadly several of these died during the drought of 2020. They have now been replaced with Blue Arrow fir trees of a similar size and shape which we hope will fare better.

The installation of the water feature in the central area is a key development. Many of our visitors may recall we had a stack of stones in position but not plumbed in! The pump and electrics are currently being positioned. When it is finished it will enhance the sensory experience of this garden by providing the gentle sound of water trickling down the stones.

Central paths and gateways

Our ability to open the garden to the public is dependent on completing the top dressing to the main paths and the installation of lockable wrought-iron gates for the north and south entrances. (North is nearest to the Grange University Hospital, south is attached to part of the old Grange House).

The Charity trustees have recently approved plans for both these key landscaping features which we are implementing in partnership with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. We are therefore very optimistic about being able to complete in time for opening to the public in the spring.



Above: Stone stack pre-installation and the water tank and pump being positioned.

The Show Gardens (SW)

There is still one empty border area in this quadrant which extends from the south gate up to the start of the stumpery. A planting plan is emerging from an A-Z list of favourite plants put forward by volunteers. It will be interesting to see how many plants we can incorporate from the alphabet!

On the outside of the south wall we are building a nursery area (for plants not children)! Half will be a 'No Dig' in-ground growing garden. This involves thickly covering the ground with cardboard to suppress weeds. New beds will be made from manure based compost with gardeners paths between them made from chipped brushwood. Thanks to the hospital Stores Dept for providing masses of cardboard boxes.



Garden Design Update

The Social Quadrant (SE)

It has been a busy time in this part of the garden. The tool shed and wash up area has been fenced in and new sheds are in the process of being assembled. The greenhouse has been emptied and given a deep clean.

Groups of volunteers have taken on responsibilities for planning, maintaining and replanting many of the beds and borders across the whole garden.

In this quadrant, the updated plan for the dahlia bed includes making changes to the boundaries and improving drainage. The planting plan has been revised with the new scheme having taller plants near the greenhouse decreasing in height as flowers reach the boundary of the main path.

The Cottage Garden planting plan has also been reviewed with some unwieldy plants removed and new additions planned.



Above: Dahlia bed replanting and various plants still flowering in the garden.



The Jubilee Beds



To celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee year the beds either side of the steps will be cleared in the spring and planted with a red, white and blue colour scheme. Our crafters are exploring ways to add some special items to enhance the scheme and scarecrow 'Max the Vax' may also get a royal work over!



Plans for the Productive Garden

The northeast quadrant is home to our Productive garden and the poly-tunnel. It's a bit of a barren wasteland at this time of year, but behind the scenes, plans are being put together for the growing season ahead.



Winter brings the "hungry gap" in the vegetable garden; the sprouts and cabbages have been harvested and all that's left are a few leeks and some chard and kale. Everything looks a bit bleak and uninspiring.



It won't be long though before it's all systems go with the first sowings for spring. Having been inspired by the successes from our first year using the No Dig organic growing method, we have decided to adopt this across the whole veg garden from now on. All our beds have subsequently been prepared for the new season by spreading about 5cm of well-rotted compost over all the beds. No digging in of course! It is just gently tamped down to provide the new plants with a firm base to establish their roots in. These will be weeded regularly before the sowing begins in earnest.

However, the onions, garlic and broad beans planted in the autumn are already poking out of the soil.

Another change for 2022 is to have volunteer "veggie-mates" buddying up to manage individual beds. This we hope will help us to share our knowledge and expertise and provide a way of coaching and mentoring our volunteers in organic vegetable growing and the No Dig approach.

Moon Growing Project

Our new project for 2022 is to experiment with sowing by the phases of the moon.

There are many farmers and gardeners around the World who swear that sowing by the phases of the moon has a beneficial effect on plants. The theory goes that a waxing moon stimulates the sap rising in plants that produce their fruit above ground. Conversely a waning moon benefits plants that produce their fruit below ground, e.g. root crops and tubers.

We plan to test this on a small scale by dividing one of our veg beds into a test bed. Half of the bed we will use to grow a variety of vegetables according to the phases of the moon and the other half will be the control, where we will grow exactly the same veg but at the opposing times. All other growing conditions will be kept the same as far as possible.

Follow us on Facebook and our website to see how we get on!



Members and Volunteers

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.



New Members Welcome

We are always open to receiving new associate members any time of year. The fee is £5 on joining, renewable on 1st January.

Members receive our quarterly newsletter as soon as it is published and early bird invitations to events. They also have access to a Members Only part of our website where they can find more information on the plans and operational aspects of the project as well as some useful horticultural learning resources.

Pick up a form from the Walled Garden or visit our website for an online application form or printable version:
<https://llanfrechfawalledgarden.wordpress.com/supporting-us/online-associate-membership-application-form/>

Membership Renewals

Reminders have been sent to all our existing members. Many thanks to everyone who has responded so far. Any members not renewed by the end of January will be deemed expired. If you have forgotten and still want to be involved, please contact the Membership Secretary, Bobinca Wilson at info.lgh.garden@gmail.com in order to be reinstated.

Join Our Volunteers

We are lucky to have around 43 regular volunteers but we are always ready to welcome more.

Many of our volunteers like to come on a set day or days, but others drop in as and when they can fit it in. They come from all walks of life and each brings their own set of skills and expertise, not all necessarily in gardening but in many other ways that can benefit the project.

Our volunteers regularly tell us how much they enjoy coming. Everyone is friendly and welcoming. Working alongside others is a great way to make friends and to learn and share expertise. Also despite being on a busy hospital site, the garden is a haven of peace and tranquility.

If you are interested in getting involved, please contact our Volunteering Secretary, Sundari at email: info.lgh.garden@gmail.com

Plant a Tree for the Jubilee

The Queen's Green Canopy is a unique tree planting initiative created to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. It invites people from across the UK to "Plant a tree for the Jubilee" in honour of our Queen and as a sustainable legacy for future generations.

Here in the Walled Garden we have already planted a new Ginkgo tree in the physic garden and six Blue Arrow conifers in the Reflective quadrant. We will be planting further specimens in other parts of the garden in the coming weeks. These will be added to the Queen's Green Canopy map.

For more information about the initiative visit the official website at: <https://queensgreencanopy.org>



Contact Us

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