

S U M M E R 2 0 2 6

The Walled Garden

Newsletter of the Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden



Welcome

Welcome to the Summer 2026 issue of the Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden newsletter.

The garden has been a beautiful place for people to enjoy over this long, hot and very dry summer. Our volunteers work hard to keep it all watered and looking good and we are so grateful for all their efforts. Find out how the garden is progressing on pages 2 and 3 with other news about our Trustees and Volunteers also in this issue.

We have been continuing to welcome lots of visitors; staff taking lunch breaks, some people just wandering through while others choose to linger and explore. The garden is also being used for a greater range of activities for people across the community and we've even extended our reach as far as the Hay Festival! Read on to find out more.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter. Feedback is always welcome. Our contact details are on the back page.

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Around the Garden

Join us for our seasonal wander around the different quadrants of the Walled Garden.

The Reflective Garden



The main priority has been keeping on top of the watering, although a lack of water doesn't seem to have affected the weeds! Overall, the plants have held up well and regular deadheading has ensured that many of them have continued to flower throughout the summer. We are particularly pleased with our display of *ammi majus* which we sowed in the spring. They are planted amongst some sedum which we split and moved last autumn to create a larger display. Some of our bearded irises have not done so well, mainly we think, because their tubers have been shaded by other plants, so we're working on rectifying that and hopefully we'll have a better display next year.



Top L-R: Sedum with Verbena Bonariensis, Japanese anemones,
Bottom: Paths in Reflective garden

The Kitchen Garden

In the Kitchen Garden, we've had a big turnaround in the polytunnel, swapping sides for tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers to prevent pests and diseases building up in the beds.



Above: Hammock being made for giant gourds. Right: in situ in the polytunnel.



The enormous bottle gourds are being grown again as they were such a HUGE success (in all respects). They now have their own hammock slung across the roof of the polytunnel to give them their own space. We are also trying to grow okra, a vegetable popular in Indian cookery.

Outside our growing beds are full of more traditional fruit and veg. We sell most of our harvests to the public on the barrow in the centre of the garden but some is saved to be enjoyed by our volunteers such as at our Summer social event. The income raised by fruit and veg sales helps cover the costs of seeds and compost.



Above: Okra fruit and flower
Right Sweetcorn and Amaranth



Around the Garden

Continuing around, we come to the south half of the garden where there has been more hard landscaping and planting done over the summer.

The Social Garden quadrant

In the Mediterranean garden, the drought tolerant plants like oleander, phormiums and euphorbias are thriving in the heat.



Above R: Oleander,
Above L: Grapevine

Our climber, Campsis Radican, and the grape vine are also doing well, forming a canopy over the pergola, and giving much needed shade. The grape vine has lots of grapes so we are looking forward to a good harvest.

The Dahlia bed has not done so well as they are thirsty plants and some of the tubers have become overcrowded. We plan to dig them up in the autumn, then we'll split them and store in the polytunnel for the winter, ready for replanting next spring.

On the upper terrace next to the cottage, a second wall and ramp have been built leading to a terrace which will provide an additional seating area with wheelchair access.



The Show Gardens quadrant

Further work has been focused on the Rainbow border, changing or moving plants to emphasise the colours of the rainbow. Finding the correct colours has been quite challenging as some shades of blue, indigo and especially green are hard to source, whereas violet and red are plentiful.



The Ornamental Vegetable garden has not suffered with the hot weather. A few gladioli corms have been planted amongst the chard and some edible flowers like marigolds. Gladioli (petals only), apparently taste like lettuce.

At the top of the scree garden is our chamomile lawn. It has taken almost 2 years to finally form a carpet of green.



The physic garden has been thinned out a bit and following a wonderful display of blossom in the spring, our cherry trees in the Japanese garden have been pruned.

In the nursery, outside the south gate, thankfully we completed the installation of the table shading just before the heatwave hit.

Have a Grow Day 2026

We had a good turn-out for this year's "Have a Grow" day despite the wet weather.



Our 'Have a Grow' day on 6th June this year was a little wet – it's difficult to remember what being soaked to the skin by relentless rain feels like writing this in mid-August, after five heatwaves and no serious rain for a couple of months! However, we had a good turnout, a variety of horticulture-related stalls and activities for all ages, lots of cake, and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves.



The stall run by local organisation 'Root for Our Future' providing advice and discussion on soil health was particularly popular. Sales from the day also made a welcome contribution to our funds at just over £1500. Many thanks to all of you who braved the weather to come and support the garden. Hope to see you back next year!



'Have a Grow' day is an annual celebration of community growing, aiming to bring people together to foster community connections through shared gardening experiences and learning. It is the brainchild of the UK wide charity 'Social Farms and Gardens' which supports communities to farm, garden and grow together; and is increasingly involved in actively supporting the concept of 'green care'. More info at this link: <https://www.farmgarden.org.uk>

Visiting Times

The garden is open every day to visitors, whether from the hospital or the community at large. We are also happy to host groups by prior arrangement for a variety of occasions. Here are some of the group visits we have supported over the summer.



Photos – clockwise from top left: Cardiology delegates, Soroptimists, Obs & Gynae staff, Chef James Nathan, Dr Bethan Davies and Dr Christoph Mädler.



In early July we were delighted to provide the lunch venue for a Cardiology Conference being held at Grange University Hospital. About 50 delegates enjoyed an impressive spread provided by James Nathan, 2008 MasterChef winner and now a local private chef. The volunteers on the day enjoyed some of the tasty treats too!

Our thanks to conference organiser Dr Bethan Davies for choosing the garden and for the generous donation towards its continued development.



Cwmbran Soroptimist club members enjoyed a coffee morning and tour of the Walled Garden on Wednesday, 22nd July. They were pleased to see that 'their' Japanese flowering cherry tree, which they donated in their centenary year, is flourishing! We were pleased to receive a donation from members as a thank you for the visit.

Every August, the junior doctors' rotation changes over and each hospital department says goodbye to one cohort and welcomes a new team of fresh faces. The Dept of Obstetrics & Gynaecology chose to hold a little garden party to mark the occasion, bringing their own food and drink and leaving a tasty gift for the garden volunteers.



Our Opening Hours

We are open daily. Our core hours are:
Sun, Mon, Tues – 09:30 – 15:00 hrs
Weds, Thurs, Fri, Sat – 10:00 – 13:30 hrs
Groups by prior arrangement



Volunteering Update

We have over 50 regular volunteers coming in to keep the Walled Garden going throughout the week. Here are some of the other things they get up to when not on their hands and knees with trowels in hand.

Summer social get-together

In July, the trustees laid on a buffet lunch for the volunteers' summer social event to say thanks for all their hard work throughout the year. A delicious spread was provided by a local caterer which included salads grown in the garden and a summer pudding and fruit galette made by one of the trustees. It was a lovely sunny day and everyone enjoyed the opportunity to meet up and also to say hello to our newest recruits.



Art in the garden with Ceri

Our volunteering stalwart Ceri is also a talented artist. Over the summer she holds open air art classes in the garden to teach and support anyone wanting to learn how to draw and paint. These are about once a month, on Saturday mornings, with sessions starting at 10 am and finishing at lunchtime. They are free and open to all.

If you would like to come along, contact us at info.lgh.garden@gmail.com for details.

Welcome newbies

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest volunteers; Anne and Judy (below) and Haydn, who escaped the camera.

Interested in volunteering with us?

Please contact our Volunteering Secretary, Sundari, at email: info.lgh.garden@gmail.com or you can pop into the garden during opening hours to speak to any of our Trustees or regular volunteers to find out more about how to get involved.



Trustees' News

Here's some news from the Trustees on the latest meetings and other developments.

Meetings of the Trustees

The next meeting of the Trustees will be on Mon 19th October at 1pm. Volunteers can nominate a representative to raise any issues and to observe proceedings.

Minutes for the meeting held on 4th August will be published to the website members pages soon and will also be placed on the shed noticeboard.

No 'Pick your Own'!

Volunteers reported an upsetting incident to the August Trustees' meeting. A visitor turned up to the garden armed with secateurs and a big carrier bag and started helping herself to produce from the growing plots. Although this was the first time such a thing has happened, it was an uncomfortable situation for anyone to have to challenge. Trustees confirmed that fruit, flowers and veg must only be picked by volunteers.

New notices have gone up to this effect which we hope will stop it happening again.



Dean's horticultural workshop

We had another successful and informative vegetable gardening workshop with Dean Peckett on Saturday 16th May. Ten guests attended and enjoyed a morning of vegetable advice and practical tips on useful tools and equipment, various types of soil cultivation methods including no dig, crop rotation, seed sowing and planting.

Each guest was taught how to successfully sow seeds in trays and pots and went home with a tray of sown lettuces and pots of dwarf French beans. Dean's wife Mandy served delicious homemade chocolate cake and tea and coffee. The feedback was very positive so we hope to do more workshops in the future.

Green Flag Award – 8 years running!



We first won this prestigious national award in 2019, with our eighth consecutive award announced in July 2026. This is a huge testament to the passion, vision and hard work of our incredible volunteers. A massive thanks is due to them, and to all who support us to ensure the garden continues to be a thriving peaceful sanctuary for patients, staff, and visitors.

Top Tips – Gardening for Butterflies and Moths

There are about 50 species of butterflies and 2500 species of moth in the UK but many are in serious decline. Here's how we can all help these important and attractive visitors to our gardens.



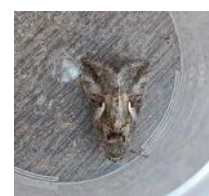
Butterflies and moths are so sensitive to environmental changes they tell us much about the state of the eco-system. Being at the bottom of the food chain means they are essential for the health of our bird populations and many other forms of wildlife like hedgehogs, bats and amphibians who feed on them. Moths are also important pollinators.



One of our volunteers is a biologist with a particular interest in moths. Over a number of summer evenings, he has set up a moth-trap to catch and record how many moths are living in the Walled Garden. The moths are released the following morning.

The good news is that because butterflies and moths cannot travel far and their life cycles are short, by providing them with the right conditions in our gardens, their populations could increase quite quickly. Here are our top tips on what to do.

-  **Grow nectar-rich flowers** – Choose a variety of flowering plants to provide nectar from spring through to autumn. Native wildflowers, lavender, buddleia, foxgloves and verbena are excellent choices for butterflies and moths.
-  **Plant for caterpillars too** – Adult butterflies and moths need nectar, but their caterpillars need specific food plants. Include native species such as nettles, grasses, willow, hawthorn and ivy to provide food and shelter.
-  **Think about moths at night** – Plant some pale or strongly scented flowers that release their fragrance in the evening, such as honeysuckle, evening primrose, jasmine and night-scented stock. These can be particularly attractive to moths.
-  **Avoid pesticides and keep things natural** – Insecticides can harm butterflies, moths and their caterpillars. Protect crops with net instead. Allow a few weeds, fallen leaves and areas of longer grass to remain, creating valuable places for insects to feed, shelter and overwinter.
-  **Provide shelter, water and sunshine** – Butterflies love warm, sunny, sheltered spots. Create a mix of sunny flower borders, hedges, long grass and sheltered corners, and provide a shallow dish of water or damp soil for butterflies to drink from.



Moths caught in the Walled Garden: top- Dusky thorn, mid: Maiden's blush, bottom - Silver Y.

Garden Events

We have 2 exciting public events coming up in the autumn. First up is our AGM and guest lecture, then we celebrate the harvest with Root for our Future. See details below.

Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & GUEST LECTURE

Sat 3rd October 2026 2-4 pm

at Grange House T&OD Room,
Llanfrechfa Grange, Cwmbran,
NP44 8YN



Our Guest Lecturer for 2026 is Kathryn Owen, Head Gardener for 'Growing in the Border' at Blackbrook Estate near Monmouth.

Discover how she and owner, Boo Vaughan, transformed their Walled Garden from a sheep field to today's glorious space with its rose parterre, yew hedges, colourful borders, fruit trees and restored Victorian greenhouses.

Free to members, non-members £6 (includes optional free membership to year-end).

Pre-booking essential as places are limited. Please email: info.lgh.garden@gmail.com



HARVEST CELEBRATION Sat 17th October 2026 10-2 pm at Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden in partnership with Root for our Future

A fun day celebrating home-grown fruit and veg; how to use it all and eliminate waste. Lots of interesting stalls and demos with tasters and handouts:

- Fresh fruit and veg for sale with free recipes
- Preserves – jams, jellies, chutneys and relishes
- Apple pressing
- Fermentation and dehydration techniques for food
- Seed saving
- Bee keeping
- Plant sale
- Refreshments stall with homemade cakes



Free Entry

Making Hay



In February we were approached with an unusual proposition; to provide vegetable plants for the bar area at this year's Hay Festival. In 2025, Stedman Brothers of Ponthir had decorated the bar with flowering plants and something similar but different was requested for this year. After some discussion we agreed to give it a go. All the plants chosen were ones we would usually grow in the Walled Garden. We provided over 130 specimens and Stedman worked their artistic magic to make a great display. Some of our volunteers even went along to see the plants in situ. It was great PR for the garden and raised over £100.

Poem

*A small team of gardeners hidden in Wales
were hatching a plan with cabbages and kale.
With kohlrabi and strawberries and parsley and bay
They potted and plotted the Main Bar at Hay.
With fennel, courgettes, coriander and peas
They filled all the planters on arthritic knees.
The stage was all set and the heatwave arrived.
There was panic that none of the plants would survive!
'Fear not!' said the team who worked up in Hay,
'We'll water them' and they grew bigger each day.
The festival opened to Worldwide applause
And the literary public poured in through the doors
As the comments poured in, some admiring, some funny ones,
Back here in the Grange it's about Knowing your Onions!*



Contact Us

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



Or on Facebook at Llanfrechfa grange walled garden



Additional photo credits: P4 HAG day Jake Lior, P7 veg picking photo by [Eileen Kummer](#) on [Unsplash](#), P8 butterflies and moths by RD McMellon and R Roome, Poem by Caroline Stedman.

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