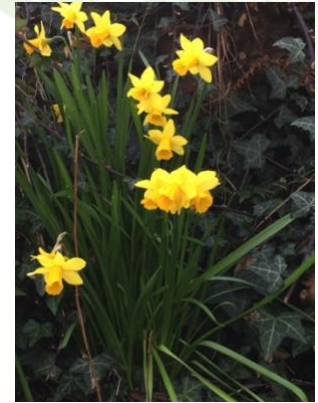


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# The Walled Garden

Newsletter of the Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden



## Welcome to Spring

Welcome to the spring 2023 issue of our newsletter.

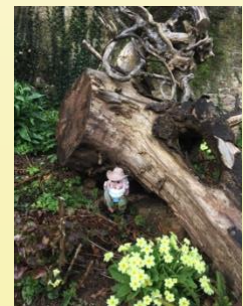
It has been a cold wet spring so far this year which has resulted in a slow start to the growing season. Winter storms have also taken their toll. Nonetheless we are busy getting the garden into shape for summer visitors. We still have a couple of challenges to resolve, namely making safe our "cottage" roof and the building of a retaining wall using reclaimed stone. We would love to hear from anyone who has the right skills and would like to help us with this.

Forthcoming events include our volunteering contribution to the UK wide celebration of the King's coronation on 8th May, 'The Big Help Out' and once again we will be joining the national 'Have a Grow Day' with Social Farms and Gardens on 3<sup>rd</sup> June. More information about these can be found in this issue.

Our membership and volunteer numbers continue to grow but we are always pleased to welcome newcomers. If you are interested in staying in touch with the project or getting involved, please go to page 7 for details. Our contact details are on the back page.

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## Around the Garden

*The north end of the garden is home to the peaceful, sensory reflective garden and on the other side, the productive garden containing the polytunnel, veg beds, soft fruit and herb garden.*

### Reflective Garden

This quadrant has had a spectacular show of daffodils this spring, with a particularly pretty display of all sorts of small bulbs under the birch tree - usually a rather dry area once the tree is in full leaf. We have now had electricity installed to enable the water feature to be connected to a pump, so hopefully there will be water gently bubbling down over the stack of stones this summer.



Jobs for the next few weeks include giving the lavender hedges their annual haircut, preparation work for resurfacing the paths, repainting the various benches, and planting out autumn sown sweet peas (sorry, the spare plants are all now sold). And of course, as always, weeding!

Our cane and wicker wigwams have lasted valiantly for several years, but we have plans to build more permanent structures for next year, not just for sweet peas but to give a little more structure during the winter months. We have also been cultivating box cuttings to place around the area in pots, again to give a bit more structure in the winter.



### Productive Garden

The 'hungry gap' has been kept at bay over the winter by growing salad crops in the polytunnel, while outside mainstays were hardy brassicas like kale, kalettes, sprouts and chard. Broad beans and garlic were started outside in the autumn and are doing well.

Seed sowing started in earnest in February using propagators. This has been boosted by the creation of a large propagation station in the polytunnel using a thermostatically controlled heated cable covered by a layer of soil on the central potting bench.

As the weather gradually warms up we will move the plants outdoors, under fleece initially. Hardier varieties will be sown direct.

This year we plan to continue with our No Dig and moon sowing principles. We are growing more salad crops for 'on the gate' sales along with some new kids on the block including cucamelons and celery. We hope these will also supplement the table for our social gatherings!

We expect to have plenty of surplus veg plants to sell in the coming weeks including a nice selection of tomato plants.



## Around the Garden

*The south end of the garden is made up of the show gardens on one side and the social spaces on the other, including the shed, greenhouse, seating and serving areas for social gatherings.*



### The Show Gardens

The demonstration gardens are maturing nicely.

The granite seat in our mock tea house in the Japanese garden is very popular with visitors who can rest a while and look out over the whole garden.

The tall grasses around the lawn have stood well over the winter and are now being trimmed back in readiness for this year's new growth.

Prunus Tai-Haku', the Great White cherry tree, has already flowered and is being followed in succession by our other two cherry trees Prunus 'Shirofugen' and Prunus 'Kanzan'.

Work has continued on the long border in front of the south wall where our rainbow effect is beginning to take shape.



### The Social Garden

The greenhouse is overflowing with seedlings and plants being grown for the garden, for sale, and for a commission from Ponthir Community Council to fill the village planters with summer colour.

A temporary cold frame has been built to help cope with the volume of plants being grown that need continued protection from late frosts.



Many hours have been spent patiently cleaning old paint off of the donated balustrade pillars and planters that will be used to edge a new seating area to be created on the upper terrace of the southeast corner. The recycled old door to our tool storage area has also been stripped and painted.



Hundreds of daffodils that heralded the spring are being deadheaded, making way for the summer colour that is beginning to emerge. This brassica was left in over winter to lend structure to the ornamental vegetable plot and has rewarded us with these lovely spring flowers.

## Winter Challenges

*The high winds and heavy rains of winter took their toll in the garden. Running repairs on the polytunnel and cottage roof served their purpose, but with spring it's time for permanent fixes.*

### Restoration of the Poly-tunnel

Over a very cold March weekend, a special working party was convened to urgently replace the cover of the poly-tunnel after the wreckage wrought by winter storms.

Taking the cover off was challenging as the second time it ripped in high winds, it was beyond repair. A group of volunteers braved the storm again, to remove it before it blew away.

The new cover consisted of a single sheet of very heavy plastic, which had to be hauled right over the top and down the other side. Then it had to be pinned in place on one side and tensioned to make it as tight as a drum. We were very grateful for the advice and expertise of David Rowley supplemented by the usual helpful videos on YouTube!



The photos give an idea of what was involved. Our thanks to all the volunteers who helped out including those who brewed tea and made cakes to keep up morale. They were much appreciated! Thanks also to Ponthir Community Council for their grant award towards the cost of repairs.

### Cottage Roof

The “cottage” by the south gate is in much need of refurbishment but with so much still to do in the garden, it has had to take a back seat. However the high winds of winter have made some of the roof slates unstable. Unfortunately for health and safety, this has meant that we have had to cordon off the south gate until we can get it fixed. Hopefully this will be quite soon as we are obtaining quotes for the work.



# Visitor Opening Times

Daily from 10:00 a.m. to 1.30 p.m.

The garden is open to the public every day while volunteers are working in the garden. Access is via the wrought iron gates at the north end (Grange Hospital side) and south end (Llanfrechfa Grange side).

Core opening hours are 10 a.m. to 1.30 pm, but often the garden is open either side of these times, depending on the numbers of volunteers in, which varies throughout the week.

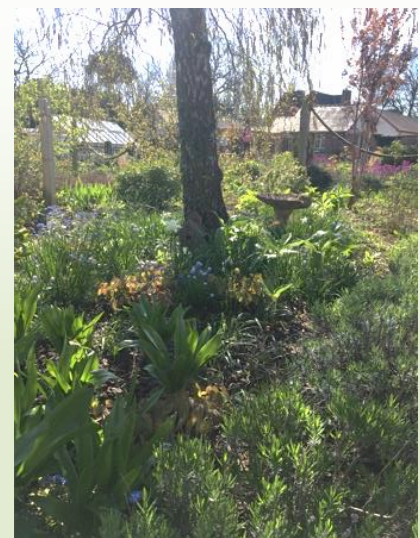
Group visits can be accommodated by prior arrangement. Our contact details can be found on the back page.



## Garden entry guidance

***In order to ensure everyone is able to fully enjoy the benefits of spending time in this lovely garden, we would respectfully ask visitors to observe a few simple rules.***

- Opening hours depend on when volunteers are working on site, so some days we will be open longer than others. A hand bell will ring 5 mins before closing to warn visitors the gates are closing.
- For your own safety and volunteers' working needs, please observe signs indicating any closed or fenced off areas.
- The Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden do not take responsibility for any loss or damage to personal belongings left unattended.
- We do not have refuse collecting facilities so please take your litter home.
- Dogs welcome if kept on a lead. Please pick up and dispose of any doggie foul.
- Please respect other people's enjoyment of the garden. If you wish to listen to music, please use earphones.
- Fires and barbecues are not permitted.
- It is against the law to smoke on NHS Wales premises.



## News in Brief

### St David's Day Visitors



We were delighted to welcome back Cwmbran and District Soroptimists on St David's Day. They enjoyed a visit of the garden on a somewhat chilly day so coffee and Welsh cakes were taken in our cosy greenhouse! Our thanks for their generous donation of £56 presented by Marian John to our Vice Chair Jane Nehaul.

### Seeds Gatherings

A small selection of seeds we gathered from the garden in 2022, were carefully dried and sorted by volunteers. These went on sale in April for £1 per packet and have been a big hit with visitors. We still have some stock left, so please drop us a line or visit the garden to see what's available.



We also have a surplus of proprietary seed packets for vegetables and herbs which we have stored in a swap box. On dry days we will pop this on our barrow for visitors to peruse.

If anyone has seeds to swap, please bring them along and pop them in the box and take whatever you would like in exchange. If you don't have any swaps, you are still welcome to take some seeds. A small donation into our honesty box would be appreciated.

### Supporting Local communities

The Ponthir Community Council have a dozen small timber planters and one larger one set out around the village, at bus stops and other roadside areas. They have refurbished them over the winter and have commissioned the Walled Garden to plant these up with summer bedding.

We have agreed a palette of yellows and oranges to provide a vibrant splash of colour, and are currently growing the plants in our tunnel and greenhouse.

Some children from the Village Brownies and Guides may lend a hand to pot on the plants before the final planting out in late May.



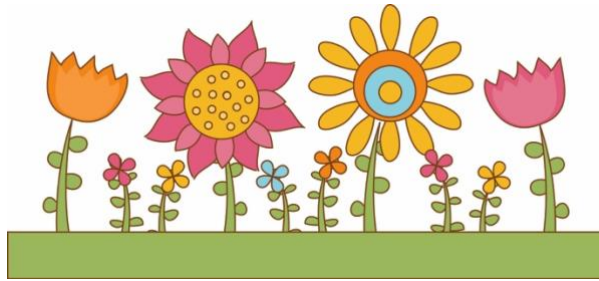
### Pizza delivery

We have bought a pizza oven!

The Sunday volunteers were the guinea pigs for our first attempt at cooking in it. That went rather well, so pizza will be on the menu for the May 8<sup>th</sup> Working Party!







## Summer Diary

**Mon 8<sup>th</sup> May**  
10:30 – 17:00 hrs

**The Big Help Out -  
Volunteering Day**

Join us as part of the Big Help Out volunteering offering across the UK for the King's Coronation.

**Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June**  
10:30 - 16:00 hrs

**Have a Grow Day**

Join us once again for this national celebration of community growing organised by Social Farms and Gardens. Plants, propagation and produce plus lots of fun activities for all the family. Free entry.

**Tues 18<sup>th</sup> July**  
12:00 – 14:30 hrs

**Volunteers' Social BBQ**

An opportunity for our regular volunteers to come together for good food and company.

**Thurs 3<sup>rd</sup> August**  
16:00 – 18:00 hrs

**Annual General Meeting  
and Plant Sale**

Our AGM is a formal public meeting to present the Annual Report and Annual Accounts for the Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden charity. This will be followed by a plant sale to raise funds for the garden.

## Supporting us

You can support the garden by becoming an associate member. Membership fees, at just £5 a year, provide valuable funds for the upkeep of the garden and enable our supporters to keep in touch via this newsletter, social media and special events. Visit our website for more info at: <https://llanfrechfawalledgarden.wordpress.com/supporting-us/online-associate-membership-application-form/> or contact our Membership secretary Binca Wilson at: [info.lgh.garden@gmail.com](mailto:info.lgh.garden@gmail.com)

We also have an amazing group of volunteers working in the garden every day of the week. Our regulars work on a rota on the days and times that suit them best and can choose from a wide range of tasks. We have other volunteers who come for specific projects and working parties as and when needed.

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest volunteer Margaret Bradley.



If you are interested in volunteering for us, please email our Volunteering secretary Sundari at: [grangegardensundari@gmail.com](mailto:grangegardensundari@gmail.com)



## National Gardening Week



The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) is celebrating its National Gardening Week 1<sup>st</sup>- 7<sup>th</sup> May. Started in 2012, this is an annual event encouraging people to share their love of gardening and raising awareness about how gardening improves people's lives.

This year's theme is "create your coronation container", to celebrate His Majesty King Charles III's coronation and his love of horticulture. Whether it's a border, plant pot or pair of wellies, all are encouraged to upload images of their efforts to the RHS website and other social media. If you fancy taking part, don't forget you can pop into the Walled Garden for inspiration and we have plants to buy from our nursery. For more information about NGW visit:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/national-gardening-week>

## Contact Us

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Or on Facebook at Llanfrechfa grange walled garden

