

BOTANIC GARDEN NEWSLETTER



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

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Friends of the Botanic Garden

BOTANIC GARDEN NEWS

Planting ahead for Crocus Sunday



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Dozens of staff and students at the University of Leicester, which runs the Botanic Garden, volunteered to help plant the bulbs 80,000 crocus bulbs in an Indian paisley pattern over the course of three days in November. The bulbs have been paid for by the Friends of the Garden.

Nick Bailey said: "We're incredibly grateful to the volunteers who helped with this and the Friends – without them it wouldn't be possible. The enthusiasm behind this is wonderful to see. "This area of the garden- Beaumont Lawn - will bloom with a beautiful palette of colour including gold, violet and mauve when Spring comes. It's just another element of the garden which all visitors will be able to enjoy, particularly during our Crocus Sundays on the last two Sundays of February. Friends of the Botanic Garden will also be offering home-made cake and hot drinks in Beaumont Hall.

"The Crocuses came from a local supplier and were planted in a giant 24 x 24 metre pattern. I believe the Paisley motif originated from ancient Mesopotamia but was popularised from India – travelling to Southeast Asia and Europe where it again evolved. In choosing this pattern we aim to celebrate the diversity of Leicester and its many communities."

A Winter Walk in the Botanic Garden

Cold and frost can bring surprises into the winter garden. The leaves on shrubs often change colour, and hardier specimens will flower, while a frost can bring beautiful glisten to shrubs.



Hellebores



Lavender crocus border



Edgeworthia Chrysantha-
Oriental Paperbush

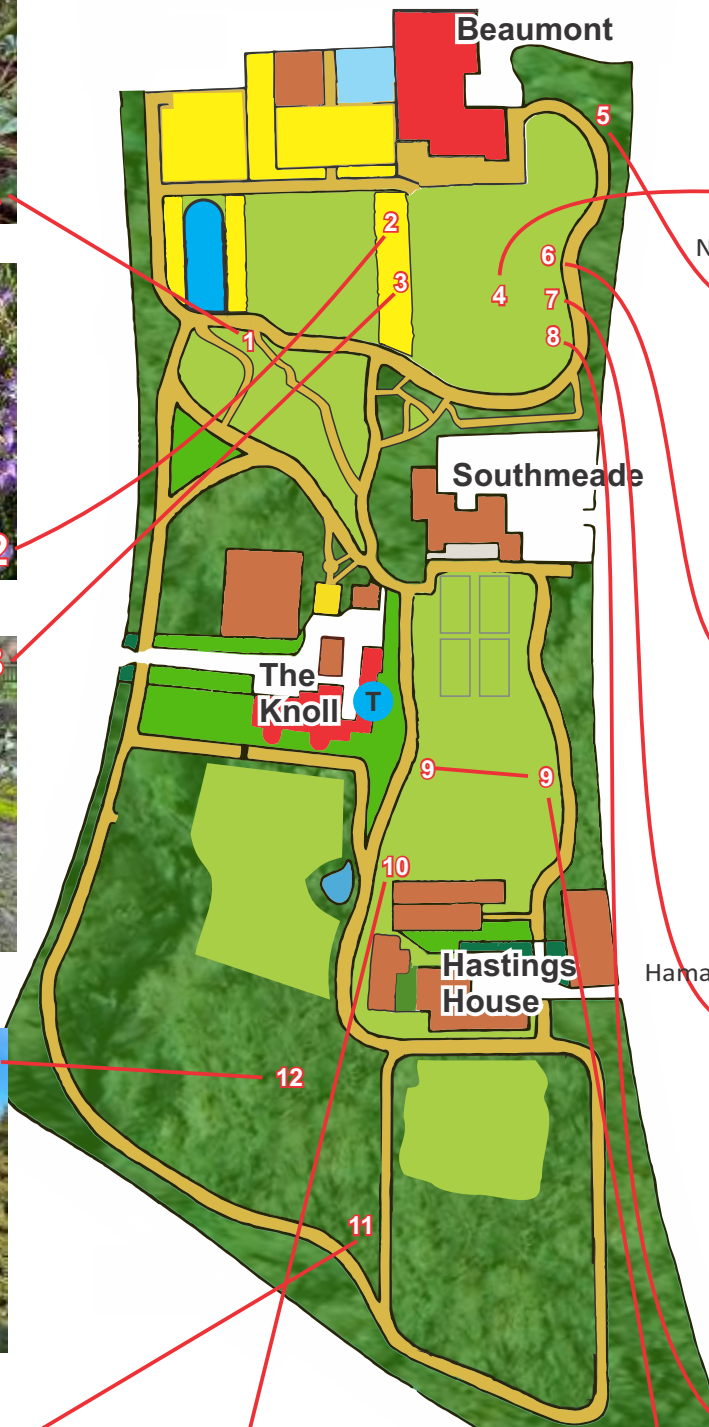


Liquidamba formosana
American Sweetgum



Euonymus hamiltonianus

A word of warning: our selection has been based on November to February photographs over the past three years. It is likely to be different this year. Enjoy your walk!



Ginkgo biloba
Maidenhair Tree



Cortadera selloana
- Pampas Grass



New paisley design crocus planting



Camellia Williamsii - Bow Bells



Hamamelis mollis - Chinese Witch Hazel



Acer griseum -Paper-bark Maple



Parrotia persica -
Persian Ironwood

Children's Dragon Workshop

Leicester has a long history of stories that include a dragon! There was one on our early University crest, and on the crest of a well-known Leicestershire family, the Beaumonts.

Our local dragons are wyverns. A wyvern has wings, two legs and a serpent's tail. You can see them in many places around Leicester – including as you go into the New Walk Museum on the mosaic floor, and on rooftops and weathervanes.

This new children's workshop has been developed with generous funding from Oadby Educational Foundation. It is currently being trialled with children aged 7 to 9 from two Oadby schools, Langmoor and Brocks Hill. Once finalised, it will be added to the Botanic Garden's programme of educational workshops which any school can book.

The children have had a letter from a 2,000 year-old Dragon in Australia who has seen the Botanic Garden on Trip Advisor and wants to visit. What will the Dragon enjoy when it comes? This Dragon likes trees, using maps, having baths, playing games that begin with D, designing patterns and making new friends.

Across the workshop day, children mostly work in pairs or a three, with three activities outside in the garden and three inside Beaumont Hall. Exploring with a map engages children in looking for similarities and differences, and thinking about weathervanes, wind and compass points. Identifying trees has children using Latin and English names for tree families, as well as looking at each tree's leaves, seeds, trunk and shape. The children also find sticks, leaves and other material to build a shelter for a little dragon.

In case they bump into a dragon, the children learn a Roman dice game and play dominoes; make symmetrical patterns using mirrors; and work together to write and draw their own stories about a dragon and a creature they might meet in the garden.

We provided a card for each child to cut out and make their own wyvern after the workshop. We hope they will start to spot these mythical creatures across the city and county. Perhaps you've seen the three below in our photos?

Prof Rose Griffiths, School of Education and
Ruth Godfrey, Education Officer



On volunteering for the Friends

Our family moved from Liverpool to Oadby in the Autumn of 1979. Over the next fifteen years we travelled in, out, and around Leicester, often using the London Road as our main route, and never once suspected that a Botanic Garden lay hidden behind the hedge on the right hand side of the road, just before you got to the 'Leicester City' sign. We moved even closer to the Botanic Garden in 1994, but with none of my 'routes' requiring me to turn into Glebe Road, the garden remained a secret.

Fortunately, my new neighbour knew about the Botanic Garden, and it wasn't too long before she asked if I could give her a hand making 'baps' for something called 'The Plant Sale and Family Day'. So, I joined her and a few other 'Friends' at her house on a Saturday to make up baps, with bread rolls she had purchased from the village bakery, sliced ham from the village butcher, and eggs that she had boiled and prepared for sandwich filling the night before. Shortly after that I found my way to the Botanic Garden, and the 'Friends' who have been 'constant companions' to our family ever since.

Over the years, like many others, I've washed up, wiped tables, served cakes, scrubbed kitchen floors, put up signs, taken down signs, put chairs out, put chairs away, gone on trips, attended talks, organised talks. Some of you will remember cleaning all the plant signs, and photographing the broken ones—so they could be replaced—on two hot April Saturdays.

One of the great things about volunteering is that you rarely have to do a task by yourself, and if you are doing something that might be regarded as 'tedious', you can take comfort in knowing that someone else is as well.

When you volunteer with the Friends you know that you are helping to make the Botanic Garden a better garden or helping the Friends to make money to support other improvements in the garden. With UK universities, including Leicester University, all facing extreme financial challenges, our voluntary contributions have become increasingly important.

We have Crocus Sundays in February, and our Plant Sale and Family Day in June, when we will need volunteers to make the days go smoothly, and we can usually find a job that you would enjoy doing.



**As the Friends of the Botanic Garden
moves through its fifth decade we need to
ask ourselves again why a Botanic Garden
needs Friends**



Our constitution reminds us that:

Our principal aim is to advance public education and research in botany, horticulture and ecology at the Botanic Garden and to improve it's amenities. We do this by holding lectures or discussion, workshops and demonstrations on various topics related to the garden. In the past year we extended our interest to include the birds and bats that visit the Botanic Garden.

Our guiding team hosts guided tours and informal walks in the Botanic Gardens, and we support the activities of the Education Team to ensure that we are supporting the learning for a wide range of learners.

We offer both practical support to improve the garden as well financial support to allow the purchase of equipment that might be needed by the horticultural and education teams, and in the past have made contributions to support the purchase of equipment, plants and other features.

The Friends also tries to provide a focus for people with an interest in botany and horticulture to be able to develop that interest through a variety of intellectual and practical measures.

Many of our aims are supported and achieved through the support of volunteers, who both learn and help others learn while they are engaged in their voluntary activity.

QUESTIONNAIRE

We'd like you to think about your experience as a Friend of the Botanic Garden to help us learn how we can make good use of the talents you bring to our organisation.

Please tick/Click all relevant boxes:

1. Did you discover FULGB via:

- ☐ Internet
- ☐ Magazine or Newspaper
- ☐ TV or Radio
- ☐ Personal contact
- ☐ Other

2. Which of our activities are you most interested in:

- ☐ Morning Talks with refreshments in Beaumont
- ☐ Evening lectures in Beaumont
- ☐ One-day summer garden visit by coach
- ☐ Four-day hotel based summer gardens tour by coach

3. Please mark your interests in contributing:

- ☐ Training for and delivering simple guided garden tours
- ☐ Training for and delivering simple guided arboretum tours
- ☐ Training for and doing volunteer work in the garden
- ☐ Working as a morning talk catering volunteer
- ☐ Working as a Plant Sale and Family Day volunteer
- ☐ Working as a garden visits selector and arranger
- ☐ Working as a garden visits member bookings manager
- ☐ Working as a lecturers' greeter and attendance recorder:

Do you have other suggestions for activities that the Friends should be undertaking?

4. At what time of day could you contribute?

You can bring this form to the next Friends meeting you attend, or tick the boxes and email your response to:
fulbg.volunteer@gmail.com

Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)



With the kind permission of CWGC

On 30 October, the Friends invited Mr Ivor Perry, for many years a volunteer with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), to speak to a mixed audience about its work. This subject matter was particularly poignant as the University of Leicester was founded as a memorial to those who died in World War One (WWI). Additionally, leading fundraisers who contributed to the establishment of the University were the Brice family. The family built and lived in two of the houses in the Botanic Garden (now called Beaumont and Southmead). They lost their only son during WWI and built the Brice Memorial Hall on Queens Road in his memory.

Mr Perry explained that the CWGC was founded by a charter of 1917 although the idea of having an organisation to look after the graves in perpetuity of those who died in both World Wars had been floated in 1915. There were many astounding statistics given in the talk such as the fact that the CWGC is a worldwide organisation which looks after the graves of 1.7 million forces personnel, including those in the merchant navy and auxiliary services. In the UK there are 306,000 commemorations and 170,000 war

graves in 13, 000 locations which are cared for with the help of 2000 volunteers. One of the key guiding principles of the CWGC is that every member of the forces who died should be remembered by name, either on a communal monument such as the Menin Gate which records 52,000 names of the missing, or by an individual grave. All graves are marked with the iconic headstone which is very similar in design and layout, regardless of the person's rank or service. There are some differences in the actual stone used and the culture of the country in which the cemetery is located can have an impact. In Gallipoli, for example, some gravestones lie flat although this is not generally the case in most countries. Similarly, CWGC cemeteries are planted to give the feel of a garden where possible.

The work of the CWGC continues as fallen service personnel are still being found. Archaeology and DNA can sometimes be used to identify the person; regardless, all are buried with dignity, respect and honour.

The talk was a sensitively presented and fascinating insight into the work of the CWGC and a collection on the day from the Friends and audience raised £400.

Paula Dobrowolski

Friends of the Botanic Garden

University of Leicester Botanic Garden, Glebe Road, Oadby, LE2 2LD
Friends' Address: University of Leicester Botanic Garden, University Rd, Leicester LE1 7RH

JOIN OUR EVENING TALKS IN THE BOTANIC GARDEN



Talks take place in Beaumont Hall Bar, Stoughton Drive South, LE2 2NA

Talks start at 7.30.
Refreshments follow the talk.
Friends free, Guests £2.00



Thursday, 29 January 2026

The Sewage Question: This talk concentrates on the pioneering experiments of early adopters of sewage farming and their successes and failures in delivering sewage-grown produce for human consumption to the market. Those who have gone before have invariably shown themselves wiser than us, and it would pay us well if we gave due attention to what they did.

Richard Jones -Associate Professor of Landscape History, University of Leicester



Thursday, 26 February 2026

Adventures in Pollination!

What 35 years of global field work has taught me about how flowers manipulate their pollinators"

Prof. Jeff Ollerton BSc (Hons) PhD FHEA

Consulting scientist and writer

Visiting Professor at the University of Northampton (UK) and the Kunming Institute of Botany (China)

Jeff will also bring copies of his two books with him, should anyone wish to purchase a signed copy.



Thursday, 26 March 2026 AGM

The Director, Nick Bailey will address the Friends

In the past year the presence of a new, and talented Director has brought back excitement to visits to the garden and confirmation of the reasons why Botanic Gardens need and improve with 'Friends'. Nick Bailey will be telling us more about what we can look forward to in the coming months and years.

CROCUS SUNDAYS IN THE BOTANIC GARDEN



15 and 22 February 2026- 10.00 until 4.00

(In support of a Leicester-based medical charity)

Come and see the amazing display of 80,000 crocus bulbs in a traditional pattern.

Tea, coffee and home-made cake in Beaumont House. We will be looking for additional donations of cake and more volunteers to help with the cake sales, and a few volunteers at the gate to support the Charity Collectors.