

# Cumbria Organic Gardeners and Farmers



## Keeping in Touch – June 2025



*An unusual, yellow flowering Comfrey plant, spotted in a garden during the Solway Gardens' visit*

### From the Editor

COGF will be celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2027 and we would like to mark the event in some way. One thought is to plant a commemorative native tree (possibly at Gosling Sike, if permission is given). Other ideas welcome.



## Question in the COGF Whatsapp from a member:

....I think I have a fungal issue developing on my rhubarb, does anyone have any recommended treatment?



## Comfrey (*Symphytum*)

COGF has made Comfrey the focus for two of their public events this year – the plant sale at Hutton in the Forest, and Susan's Open Farm Day in June. Known also as Knitbone for its herbal properties, Comfrey is such a versatile, perennial plant.

First, it is a valuable source of nectar for bees. In my garden, in addition to *Symphytum Bocking 14*, I have *Symphytum ibericum*, which flowers earlier than the common variety, so particularly good for bees. It is a low growing plant with a spreading habit, making good ground cover.



*Symphytum ibericum*

With its leaves rich in nitrogen, potassium and phosphorous, Comfrey is widely known for its value as an excellent plant food. The leaves can famously be used to make Comfrey “tea”, when the leaves are soaked in water for a few weeks, then the resultant liquid, diluted, can be used for hungry plants, such as tomatoes, cucurbits etc. This method is anaerobic and the resultant liquid is so smelly it often puts people off making it. What is not so well known is that it can be produced aerobically, with very little smell. This is done by simply cramming the leaves, with no water, into a lidded container. If done on a large scale, a container with a tap near the base would be ideal. As the leaves break down, the resultant liquid is very dark and rich and needs much more diluting than the “tea”.

Finally, another simple way to use this valuable source of nutrients is to place the leaves directly as a mulch around plants. As they decompose, these nutrients will be taken up in the soil to feed the plant. Some years ago I read that placing a couple of leaves under potatoes when planting them was useful. I tried this but had no discernible results - that is not to say it wasn't beneficial. I would need to do a more controlled trial to decide.



*Comfrey tea made anaerobically*



*Comfrey tea made aerobically*

### ***Future Event Reminders:***

**Open Farm Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> June, 11.00 am – 4.00 pm**

There are three member venues this year:

Low Stanger Farm, Cockermouth, CA13 9TS

Low Netherscales Farm, Embleton, Cockermouth, Cumbria CA139YP

Susan's Farm, The Croft, Houghton, near Carlisle CA3

COGF will have a stall at Susan's Farm with information boards, leaflets and advice.

There may be some differences in the timings at each farm. Please check the link for details:  
<https://farmsunday.org/visit-a-farm/search?location=Cockermouth+&region=&farmName=>



# Report

## Visit to three Gardens on the Solway, 3<sup>rd</sup> May

It was a beautiful day for visiting gardens, and these three gardens didn't disappoint.

All three were different. The first one had a very relaxed planting scheme with some interesting specimens, including the yellow flowering Comfrey on the front page.

It is weathered from the South West, with fruit trees and some specimen trees, including Poplars and a Sweet Chestnut. A wild flower meadow is sited in the middle of a small copse. We had a lovely browse here, spotting the somewhat rare plants. There were herbs but no vegetables, as we were told something eats them!

The next garden was as extensive and we were told stories of how the garden has evolved over the years to accommodate family needs, such as a football pitch, an array of pets, and presently a desire to grow food.

Of particular interest to members were the recycled plastic raised beds (see picture below). These are sourced from Solway Recycling and are manufactured using the black plastic waste from farm bales. As you can see from the picture, they slot together, making construction simple. Lengths of the recycled plastic are also available for construction to specification.



The last garden was not the least, where large scale organic vegetable growing has been going for over forty years. You can imagine after this length of time, that lessons have been learned and techniques developed. For example, a water collection system with tiered vessels was impressive.



*The water collection system*

Another piece of kit acquired to help with compost making is an old manual plant waste shredder, useful as it will take soft material, which the modern electric ones won't. We saw one similar to this at Sprint Mill, where it was used regularly.



*Manual waste chopper*

It was a very interesting and enjoyable visit. Thank you to all for allowing us to come and making us so welcome.



## Report Plant Sale, 11<sup>th</sup> May

It was a glorious day to be out in the beautiful setting of Hutton in the Forest, talking about growing. We had many plants for sale and the focus was on Comfrey and its uses.



One of the useful things about doing the plant sale with COGF colleagues is that you learn a lot from each other. One of our members had brought along some Collards to sell and extolled their properties: part of the Brassica family and much like cabbages but don't form a head. Leaves are taken as needed and a small head of leaves is formed where they are removed. Intrigued, two of us bought them out at the end.



*Collard plants*

Many thanks to all who helped and organised the day.

## Cumbrian Farmers' Markets

- **Brampton** – last Saturday of the month
- **Brough** – 3rd Saturday of the month
- **Carlisle city centre** – 1st Saturday of the month
- **Carlisle Borderway** – 2nd Saturday of the month
- **Cockermouth** – 1st Saturday of the month
- **Egremont** – 1st Saturday & 3rd Friday of the month
- **Houghton** – 2nd Saturday of the month
- **Kendal** – last Friday of the month
- **Keswick** – 2nd Thursday of the month
- **Milnthorpe** – 2nd Friday of the month
- **Orton** – 2nd Saturday of the month
- **Penrith** – 3rd Tuesday of the month
- **Sedbergh** – every Wednesday
- **Ulverston** – 3rd Saturday of the month

Organic produce can also be ordered from the Open Food Network's website:  
<https://openfoodnetwork.org.uk/cumbria-farmers/shop>

**Gardening joke from Hugh:** The only thing I grow in the garden is tired.



For anyone wishing to visit the Garden Organic partner gardens as shown below, you must have membership. To join, go to: <https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk>

## Visit beautiful gardens...

With your Garden Organic membership, you can visit any of our partners gardens across the UK for free or at a discounted rate. Our partner gardens are shown on the adjacent map. For details of each garden, including the specific offer, please see overleaf.

Please check with the gardens ahead of visiting to confirm opening times. Although every effort is made to keep details up to date, Garden Organic cannot be held responsible for the closure of gardens on this list.



**garden  
organic**

est. 1958  
for organic  
gardeners



# Visit beautiful gardens...



**1. Cawdor Castle**

Free entry during May, June, Sept & Oct

[www.cawdorcastle.com](http://www.cawdorcastle.com)

**2. Normanby Hall Country Park**

Free entry

Tel: 01724 720588

**3. Fairhaven Woodland & Water Garden**

2 for 1 entry

[www.fairhavengarden.co.uk](http://www.fairhavengarden.co.uk)

**4. West Dean Gardens**

2 for 1 entry

[www.westdean.org.uk](http://www.westdean.org.uk)

**5. Clovelly Court Gardens**

Free entry

[www.clovelly.co.uk](http://www.clovelly.co.uk)

**6. Moors Meadow Gardens**

2 adults for £6.50

[www.moorsmeadow.co.uk](http://www.moorsmeadow.co.uk)

**7. Birmingham Botanical Gardens**

2 for 1 (weekdays only)

[www.birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk](http://www.birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk)

**8. Ryton Organic Gardens**

Free entry

[www.gardenorganic.org.uk](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk)

**9. Mount Pleasant Gardens**

2 for 1 entry

[www.mountpleasantgardens.co.uk](http://www.mountpleasantgardens.co.uk)

**10. Brantwood**

2 for 1 entry

[www.brantwood.org.uk](http://www.brantwood.org.uk)

**11. The Yorkshire Arboretum**

Free entry to arboretum

[www.yorkshirearboretum.org](http://www.yorkshirearboretum.org)

**13. Ty Hyll**

Free entry

[www.theuglyhouse.co.uk](http://www.theuglyhouse.co.uk)

**14. The Yeo Valley Organic Garden**

2 for 1 entry

[www.yeovalley.co.uk/the-organic-garden](http://www.yeovalley.co.uk/the-organic-garden)

**15. The Milntown Gardens**

2 for 1 entry

[www.milntown.org](http://www.milntown.org)

**16. Nant y Bedd**

2 for 1 entry

[www.nantybedd.com](http://www.nantybedd.com)

**17. Grapes Hill Community Garden**

Free entry

[www.grapeshillcommunitygarden.org](http://www.grapeshillcommunitygarden.org)

Offers may not apply on event days. Please check with specific garden before visiting.

Garden Organic is the working name of the Henry Doubleday Research Association. Registered charity in England & Wales (no. 298104) and Scotland (SC046767).

PACT (Penrith Action for Transition) event:

# ON THE SAME PAGE



Chat over a  
hot/cold drink and  
a biscuit or cake

**Reading Group**  
**which meets**  
**every 2 months**

**Come along - find out and  
discuss **Environmental Issues** and ways  
we can work to make sustainable choices  
for our planet**



**Penrith Library**  
**6.30pm-8pm**

**Booking & Info call 01768 812100 or email  
[penrith.library@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](mailto:penrith.library@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk)**

11th March  
13th May  
8th July  
9th Sept  
11th Nov



# Diary of COGF Events in 2025

**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> June, from 11.00 am until 4.00 pm**

COGF at Open Farm Sunday, at Susan's Farm, Houghton; Low Stanger and Low Netherscales near Cockermouth

**Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> July**

Visit to Threave Gardens, Dumfries and Galloway

**Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> August**

Visit to Ryton, Garden Organic HQ

**Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2.00 pm**

Visit to HMP Haverigg

**Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> September, 10.00 am until 4.00 pm**

COGF at Apple Day, Hutton-in-the-Forest

**Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2.00 pm**

COGF AGM, Braithwaite Institute



|                  |             |                |              |                            |
|------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Committee</b> | Chairperson | Susan Aglionby | 01228 523747 | susan.aglionby01@gmail.com |
|------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|----------------------------|

|                             |                 |              |                       |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Membership Secretary</b> | Frankie Kennett | 07407 240799 | cogfmembsec@gmail.com |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------------|

