

Cumbria Organic Gardeners and Farmers



Keeping in Touch – July 2025



*What do you do when a conifer tree comes down in a storm?.....
.....carve a giant pinecone from it! – as seen at Threave Gardens*

From the Editor

A member made a visit to Daylesford Organics and wrote about it for KIT (see pages 2 and 3). Does anyone else have any experiences they would like to share? We're always looking for items for KIT. Please contact me with any suggestions or articles.

A group of members will be visiting Garden Organic's headquarters at Ryton, near Coventry next month. It has been quite a while since a visit here was arranged and I am looking forward to it.

There is another interesting visit - with a difference - coming up in September, to HMP Haverigg near Milom. See page 9 for details.

You will see on page 10 a copy of a poster that was being handed out at Susan's Farm Open Day. It sounds like a good campaign if a group of committed people can get together and there is, obviously, land available. I'm unsure how this fits into the allotment movement, other than it would operate more as a collective.

Daylesford Organic – a surprise venture on a day out....

Daylesford Organic is near Morton in the Marsh in the heart of the Cotswolds, and is owned by Carole Bamford, wife of JCB Chairman Antony. Carole's vision for Daylesford Organic centres around celebrating organic farming, craftsmanship and holistic living. The shop has award-winning food, drink, homeware, hampers, gifts and a cookery school. You can also stay there. They also have shops in London – it is said to be the most expensive farm shop in the UK.

My husband and I stayed in the Cotswolds, close to Daylesford, en route to Cornwall, at the very end of April. It turned out to be one of the hottest days of the year, following a very warm, dry month. We decided to walk across the fields to Daylesford with our dog. On passing the polytunnels and vegetable fields I spied an employee going to collect the day's veg to be sold in the shop or used in the restaurants. I asked her if I may take a look in the polytunnels and to my surprise she said yes. She was going to pick the last of the purple sprouting broccoli, spring cabbage and kale.



In the first polyunnel they had just planted out tomatoes, chillies, aubergines and spring onions.



The second tunnel had more tomatoes and lettuce – green and red.



The third had a wonderful crop of Mangetout, just ready for picking



In the fourth tunnel, someone was busy picking for the kitchens - young kale, rocket and parsley.

The fifth tunnel (no photo) housed a crop of leeks, which, with the hot weather, had bolted and were due to be replaced with courgettes.

After a discussion on the weather for the month of April, the trials and tribulations of growing crops in a polytunnel, the need for constant strict rotation of crops and the use of well rotted farm manure, which they have plenty of, it was time to go.

The surrounding farm is run in a very sustainable way with small fields, lots of hedgerows and small herd and flock numbers. The shop, cafe and restaurant area is lovely to say the least, I could spend a fortune there but all I bought was a packet of carrot seeds costing £3.50, (they had better grow and be good.)

A wonderful display of organic fruit and vegetables were available for sale, the delicatessen counter was divine with lovely cheeses, meats, salads etc to buy. The meat counter was ridiculously expensive but superb, being from their farm - sirloin steak on the bone was £100 per kg. The fish counter was good and interesting.

The range of sourdough bread and cakes was excellent. And so to the cafe, where we enjoyed organic tea and scones and delightful homemade strawberry jam. We watched how the other half live in the Cotswolds for an hour and a half, for not a lot more than you would pay in a nice cafe at home.

We wandered back across the fields, calling at the White Rabbit pub, another outlet owned by Daylesford, for some light refreshments. A good day out on such a glorious day.

Later that afternoon my husband wanted to visit "Clarkson's farm pub" (owned by tv personality, Jeremy Clarkson), so off we went and found it - a brilliant site, and clearly states everything for sale is made or grown nearby.

The pub was reasonably priced with everything locally sourced and cooked on site (although honey was £12 a 500 gm jar!). He doesn't serve coffee, Coke or tomato sauce but he does serve British tea. After two apple juices and two giant sausage rolls, sitting in the middle of a big field watching the world go by, it was time to go, feeling everything was right with the world.

Daylesford says:

"Our B Corp Certification recognises the efforts we make every day to reduce our impact and be a positive force for change. Being B Corp Certified is about always working to be better and we are proud and excited to be part of a global movement of collective action."

"By embracing regenerative principles, our intention is to give back more than we take from our planet and ultimately to leave the earth in a better state than we find it."



daylesford ORGANIC

Local Organic Suppliers

Here is a list of COGF organic suppliers:

Susan's Farm, The Croft, Houghton: beef, lamb

Slackhouse Farm, Gilsland: cheese, milk, yogurt, crowdie and free range eggs

Low Stanger Farm near Cockermouth: fruit and vegetable box scheme

Low Netherscales Farm, Cockermouth: fruit, vegetables

Dalefoot Compost, near Penrith: various composts

Cumbria Farmers (Open Food Network), West Cumbria: online shop

Other local organic suppliers that we have links to:

Eva's Organics at Low Luckens: fruit and vegetables box scheme, apple juice

Vista Veg, Crosby Ravensworth: veg box scheme

Growing Well, Tebay, supplying the motorway services farm shop; with Crop Share enterprises at Sizergh supplying to South Lakeland and at Egremont supplying to West Cumbria

Little Salkeld Mill near Penrith– flour, oats

Torpenhow, Wigton: cheese

Paul Holland, Cockermouth (Swarthmore Hall Farm): milk

Stop Birds eating your strawberries – a tip from *Allotment Garden Newsletter*



This was a tip sent in by a regular reader, Henry:

How is it that no matter what netting you put up the birds will always try – and often succeed- to get to your strawberries before you do? Well here's one extra way to stop them.

Paint a few strawberry-sized stones strawberry red and lay them just outside your netting. Make sure that in size and shape they do resemble strawberries. The birds will soon swoop down to peck them and get a real shock instead of a treat. Soon the birds will give up and leave your luscious fruits alone.

It's the same aversion therapy that we use on egg-eating chickens where we put a pottery egg in the nestbox. It is fun watching them pick up the stones and shaking their heads when they peck down. They sometimes do a little dance, perhaps in frustration.

Report

COGF at Open Farm Sunday at Susan's Farm 8th June



As always, the open farm day was a great opportunity for a free family day out. The weather was not unkind and the visitors were plentiful, numbering 670 with many children and toddlers.

The focus for the COGF stall was comfrey and its uses. With comfrey plants for sale, comfrey tea to view (and sniff!) and different ways of using comfrey and its benefits were explained. People were interested.

There were other plants to buy, mainly left from the plant sale in May at Hutton in the Forest. This makes a good point of contact with the visitors, to explain the plants' needs and why we grow organically.

Susan's farm is such a perfect setting, with its strong organic principles, stewardship and it's Care Farming side.

Thank you to all who made it work.



Reports

Threave Gardens visit, 6th July

Threave is a large National Trust for Scotland garden in SW Scotland, originally parkland attached to a small hunting lodge. The garden has evolved since the late 1950's as a teaching aid for horticultural students and therefore does not reflect any specific design or historic features. It is described as a "plantsman's" garden.

How good would it be to be a student at the National Trust for Scotland's School of Heritage Gardening at Threave! Every year, five successful students spend an intensive year honing their skills and knowledge, practical and theoretical. There is a scary requirement to learn twenty new plants every week (that's four a day with time off at weekends!) with a test every fortnight. Plants from previous weeks and seasons are also thrown in; recognise that plant with no leaves on it!

Most gardeners are self-taught, learning as we fail (and succeed), and then trying to discover why. We generally absorb knowledge as we need it, retain what we need and forget rather more than we want to. A whole year of dedicated learning about something you love sounds heaven to me!

The gardens at Threave are designed primarily with the needs of the School in mind. Every aspect of horticulture is covered somewhere in the garden so students can learn as much as possible; vegetables, borders, hedging, glass house plants, trees ... There is therefore, something for every visiting gardener whatever their special interest, and lots for most, as nearly all gardeners are interested in lots of things.

I loved the entire visit, the garden was good and the company excellent. Garden visiting is so much better with other gardeners. I came away with my head buzzing to look up things new to me. If I had a criticism, it was maybe that generalization had taken over and there were no real surprises or "Whatever is that, I've never seen it before?" moments.



A border vista



*Rows of colourful lettuce varieties
with companion planting*

I noticed this particularly in the fruit and vegetable sections of the walled garden. There was a bed of lettuces in rows of multiple colours and varieties all lovely to look at and probably a good lesson in knowing your salad plants, but not labelled. There was also a large newly planted area of what we thought were irises, but could not be sure. All the varieties were labelled but there was not one mention what the plants actually were.

Take away moments from the trip. The lovely lime tree with the honey scented flowers, the smell almost imperceptible but suddenly wafting over again. I think it was a small-leaved lime but may have got that wrong. The glass house with lots of what I would describe as house plants, with begonias of all sorts, some with spiral leaves and others with impossibly red hairy stems. And the borders stuffed full of wonderful perennials many in full flower in July.



*One of the lime trees
(small leaved lime – Tilia cordata?)*



*Close up of the lime tree blossom
which gave out such a heady scent*

I missed lots, I always do. There was an orchard and woodland quite apart from all the aspects of the nature reserve and a medieval castle ... But I came home with some new to me perennials which I will learn – maybe two or three a month, certainly not four a day.

Visit to Threave Gardens

“Threave is a rare treasure ...created by hundreds of gardeners who have learnt their craft here over decades” - Michael Lawrie head gardener 2017

I have passed the signpost to Threave Gardens many times over the years while visiting other gardens in Dumfries and Galloway; Logan Botanical Gardens, Cally Walled Garden, Glenwhan and Castle Kennedy to name a few of the most known. So at last a visit to the gardens at Threave organised by Moira.

Owned by the National Trust of Scotland, the gardens are home to the School of Heritage Gardening, where generations of gardeners have been trained to RHS standard. With just under sixty acres of gardens at 250ft above sea-level, there is a wealth of different planting to see in a series of gardens and there was not a weed in sight.

FLOWER BORDERS - along the outside wall of the Walled Garden, were filled with perennial plants buzzing with insects.

WALLED GARDEN - one acre of fruit trees beautifully pruned; vegetables ready to win any vegetable show were destined for the café kitchen; flowers interspersed throughout. Also included was a modern glasshouse with three temperate zones controlled by climatic equipment. The glasshouse plants are also bio-controlled by predatory insects.

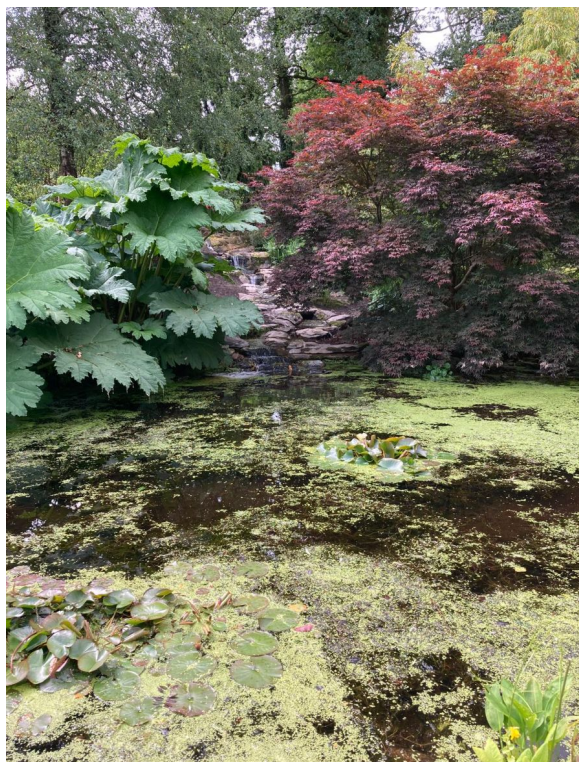
ROCK GARDEN - planted on a grand scale among natural outcrops of rock to create a hillside scree. One hill had only recently been redesigned and planted up - it would be interesting to see how this matures in future years.

WOODLAND GARDEN included a *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* (Dawn Redwood).

SECRET GARDEN - has three slate urns set among foliate

PONDS - beautiful ponds showing a majestic planting of Gunnera.

BAT HOUSE – seven species of bats have been recorded at Threave.



Majestic Gunnera by the pond



Fruit trees in the walled garden

The gardens also have a conifer collection, garden of contemplation, heather garden and view point over the surrounding countryside. Threave house and the nature reserve could also be visited. I didn't see these but hope to do on a future visit.

Finally, before leaving, most of us visited the plant shop and without crushing the bags and boxes of our precious hauls of goodies, we returned home.

A vote of heartfelt thanks to Moira was given by Susan Aglionby.

Future Event

Visit to HMP Haverigg, Middle Lane, Millom, LA18 4NA

Haverigg is a men's open prison near Millom, committed to providing a safe and educational environment where prisoners can learn new skills to help them on release.

We shall be given a tour of the farm, the wildlife conservation area and the smokery.

There is car parking space available but car sharing is planet (and people) friendly, so please try to do that.

You will need to bring along some form of ID – e.g. driving licence, passport. There are no electronic devices, such as mobile phones, smart watches, ipads etc. allowed inside, but there are lockers available at reception to store any devices you may have with you. Sturdy footwear is recommended as there will be some walking.

There is a farm shop and cafe just outside the prison, or the staff mess onsite, where refreshments can be purchased. They may take only cash.

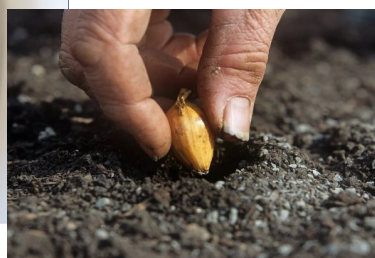


Planting onion sets



What! You put one in and you only get one back?

Away with that!





Right to Grow

Cumberland's Licence to Grow

Cumberland Council is supporting the national Right to Grow campaign by developing a community growing licence which allows communities to use pieces of Council-owned land for food growing.

We are looking for groups across Cumberland who would like to set up food growing projects.

Contact us at:

Foodpartnership@cumberland.gov.uk



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:

I'm so old now that my back goes out more often than I do.

Diary of COGF Events in 2025

Wednesday 20th August

Visit to Ryton, Garden Organic HQ

Tuesday 9th September, 2.00 pm

Visit to HMP Haverigg

Sunday 28th September, 10.00 am until 4.00 pm

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

Sunday 16th November, 2.00 pm

COGF AGM, Braithwaite Institute



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