



Gardd Goedwig Gymunedol
naturewise
Community Forest Garden



Mewn Partneriaeth â
Llywodraeth Cymru
In Partnership with
Welsh Government

Volunteering Handbook



Dave Crisp photo Dec 2nd 2025

Naturewise Community Forest Garden CIC

Official address: Co The Eco shop, Pwllhai, Cardigan SA43 1DB

Office: Office1, Ty Hedd, Priory Street, Cardigan, Ceredigion, SA43 1BZ

www.naturewise.org.uk

Forest Garden Site: Parc Teifi, SA43 1EW

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Welcome and Introductions

Welcome to the Naturewise Community Forest Garden!

This handbook is your essential guide to everything you need to know about volunteering with us. It's designed to answer your key questions, explain your role, and outline the **support** you'll receive to ensure you feel **confident and safe** while you're here.

Volunteers are absolutely essential to everything we do. We truly couldn't achieve our goals without your passion and effort. We want you to have a nourishing and satisfying experience and our management is guided by the trusted **Investing in Volunteers (IIV) Quality Standard**. [Home - Investing in Volunteers](#)

Contacting the Volunteering Team

If you have any comments or questions about this handbook or just need a friendly word, please contact the volunteering team on:

- **Phone:** 07732 861104
- **Email:** claire@naturewise.org.uk

Mission and Vision



Mission Statement for the whole project

Our mission is to improve quality of life by creating a community forest garden which will benefit both people and the environment.

Forest gardens are sustainable, edible and medicinal landscapes designed to work like the natural structures of forests with their tree, shrub and herb layers. It will provide a living model of

sustainable practise: people meeting their needs in harmony with the environment. The forest garden will enable people to build closer community relationships, reduce social isolation, provide physical activity and access nutritious, locally grown food, educational opportunities in permaculture ethics and design, forest schooling, forest gardening and biodiversity.

Nurturing respectful livelihoods and building a resilient community.

At **Naturewise Community Forest Garden**, we recognise that volunteers are the beating heart of everything we do. Without your time and dedication, our five-acre Community Forest Garden simply could not run.

This beautiful natural space—full of produce, medicinal plants, ponds, and big views—was created and continues to thrive entirely through the consistent contribution of our volunteers. You are central to Naturewise achieving its mission and aims!

A volunteer said ‘I always leave feeling calmer, more fulfilled and with a sense of purpose. It inspires me and it feels important and fun in equal measure. I feel a sense of community, working alongside each other and alongside the natural world for mutual benefit, between ourselves and the land’

Getting to Know Your Team and Support

We believe that everyone at Naturewise, Staff, Directors, and Volunteers—are part of the same community. We work hard to ensure you always know who to turn to for guidance and support.

- **The Volunteer Team:** The volunteer team are a supportive community who will help you if they can with your tasks. We will try and buddy you up each session with an experienced volunteer. We often work in small teams within an area of the garden.
- **Your Designated Contact:** Currently, two dedicated staff members: Raphaëlle and Claire coordinate all volunteer activity and focus on the welfare and support of our volunteers. They are your go-to person for all guidance, support, and day-to-day supervision.
- We will have a brief check in every month to see how you are getting on and for any kind of feedback.
- **Policy Lead: Claire Turner** takes primary responsibility for our volunteering policies and procedures, making sure our processes are always clear, fair, and up-to-date.

Getting to the Garden (Access & Location)

The Naturewise Community Forest Garden is open to all members of the public, including adults and children (under 16 accompanied by an adult), whether for volunteering, visiting, or participating in educational activities.

Location and Directions

- **Location:** Parc Teifi, Cardigan
- **Postcode for Navigation:** SA43 1EW (This postcode covers the general area of Parc Teifi)
- **what3words address:** [///earliest.blurs.glitz](https://www.earliest.blurs.glitz). <https://w3w.co/earliest.blurs.glitz>
- **What's Nearby:** The garden is located next to Cardigan Police Station and within the Teifi Business Park.

Getting There

By Car / Parking

Navigate to **Parc Teifi, Cardigan, SA43 1EW**.

The garden is situated within the industrial/business park. Take the 3rd exit at the mini-roundabout, Drive past the farmers co-op, past the police station and proceed through the large metal gate, shutting it behind you. There should be plenty of parking - please park your vehicle carefully and proceed on foot over the small bridge. The spaces on either side of the footpath are reserved for those with mobility challenges.



On Foot (from Cardigan Town Centre)

The garden is a **short walk from the centre of Cardigan**.

Starting at Finch Square, walk away from the town centre, past St.Mary's church towards the bypass. Use the shared path and crossings to go straight on towards Newcastle Emlyn, then turn left into Parc Teifi.



Follow signs or use a map app to head towards **Parc Teifi / Teifi Business Park** (near the Police Station). There is **pedestrian access** through the Teifi Business Park. Go right at the roundabout straight past the farmers coop, past police station and proceed through the gates. Look for the entrance to the garden over a small wooden bridge.

Nearest Bus Stop

- The closest bus stop is **Cardigan bus station Finch Square**.



Opening hours

The Community Forest Garden is open for volunteer days every **Tuesday** and the **3rd Saturday of the month** (10 am – 4 pm).

Access Information

The path onto the bridge and the bridge itself are wide enough for a wheel chair and there is a solid path around part of the site to the main building, standard compost

toilet and level access compost toilet. There is no fully accessible compost toilet as yet (we are hoping to find a grant to pay for this) The paths take in the most level areas of the Forest Garden, heading towards the large pond in Cae Uchaf and back around to the veg garden. There are benches around the site. The garden is 5 acres with grass paths around the rest of site, some of which can be steep or slippery in poor weather. There are a number of gates into the veg garden and the woodland walk.

Health, Safety, and Emergency Procedures

Your well-being is our top priority. We regularly review and update all safety checks and risk assessments, and we kindly ask every volunteer to familiarise themselves with the procedures for handling an emergency.

In Case of Emergency

- **First Aid Officers:** The names and locations of current First Aid Officers are clearly posted on the notice board in the main building.
- **First Aid Kit:** The main First Aid Kit is located in the Roundhouse on the wooden shelves to the right of the fire. It is clearly marked with a green cross.
- **Assembly Point:** In the event of a fire or other evacuation, the designated Assembly Point for all volunteers and staff is: over the entrance bridge on the green next to the carpark.
- **Reporting:** All incidents, accidents, or near-misses, no matter how minor, must be immediately reported to your **Designated Contact** person or any available staff member.
- **Crucial Note for a Garden Environment:** Since we are an outdoor site, be mindful of changing weather, uneven terrain, and basic tool safety. If you feel a task is unsafe, or you feel ill-equipped to do it, you have the right to stop and report it immediately.



Tool Safety

Because much of our work involves tools, following these essential rules keeps everyone safe:

- **Work Safely:** Always maintain a safe working distance from others when using tools like scythes, forks and bladed tools.
- **Storage:** Never leave tools lying flat on the ground where they can become a trip hazard. If you must set a tool down temporarily, stand it upright or place it safely out of the walkway.
- **Inspection:** If a tool looks damaged or broken, do not use it. Report it immediately to your Designated Contact for repair or disposal.



- **Instruction:** Only use tools you have been shown how to use correctly. If you're unsure about any piece of equipment, please ask for a demonstration.

Tool Care and Tidiness

Maintaining our tools is a shared responsibility that keeps our garden running smoothly.

- **Location:** All tools are stored at: either tool shed.
- **Expectation:** Please return tools to the correct place immediately after use. We expect all volunteers to take a moment to **clean and properly put away any tools** they have used before leaving for the day. A member of staff will show you where the tool cleaning brush is, where tools go and how to sharpen tools if they require it and you would like to learn. A tidy shed is a safe shed!

What is a Volunteer?

At the core, a volunteer is simply an individual who gives their time and energy to our organisation **unpaid and of their own free choice**.

For clarity, we follow the definition used by the Welsh Government, The Welsh Government Volunteering Policy (2015) which states that volunteering is an activity that:

- Is undertaken **freely, by choice**.
- Is for **public or community benefit**.
- Is **not undertaken for financial gain**.

How You Can Help Out (Roles and Activities)

Areas to Get Involved

Our main volunteer days are every Tuesday and 3rd Saturday of the month from 10 am – 4pm. While these regular sessions are central to the garden's success, there are also many other valuable ways you can get involved, often outside of these hours, which include:

Garden Maintenance & Development: Hands-on work in the 5-acre community forest garden. (typically during main volunteer sessions).



Tasks vary according to the season and can include:

Weeding, mulching, planting, sowing seeds, pruning tree and fruit bushes, clearing brambles, shovelling & taking compost in the barrow, woodchip & manure.

General maintenance tasks, fitting bird boxes, painting wood work, mending things, sweeping, fencing, dead hedging, trimming branches.

Labelling, organising & recording tools, books & equipment.

photographing & labelling plants & wildlife

weighing & recording produce

picking produce, cooking produce for either chutney or community open days or special events
Manning stalls at events, making tea , making cakes.



Community Engagement: Raising awareness of our work at local events and through promotion.

Writing an article, outreach work, talking about your experience as a volunteer, visiting a school or another organisation.

Administration & Outreach: Helping with behind-the-scenes tasks like admin or social media.

Helping with the website, Facebook, posters, ideas, typing up meeting notes, sending out annual agreements, assisting with record-keeping alongside a member of staff who manages the accounts, planning tasks and researching and gathering information on potential costs for project tasks, looking for grants, developing writing for grants.

Planning: Contributing your ideas toward the long-term development of the garden.

Attending planning meetings, doing research, writing, gathering ideas, collating feedback.

You can view our current roles on **Volunteering Wales** here: [Outdoor gardening & conservation Volunteer - Opportunity - Volunteering Wales](#)

We are happy to welcome you, no matter how much time you can offer! Every moment you give makes a difference



Benefits of Volunteering at the Garden

Volunteering is a two-way street. Here are some of the ways you can benefit from spending time with us:

- **Health and Wellness:** Boost your health by spending time in the fresh air and engaging in physical activity. Volunteers report better physical health than non- volunteers. Volunteering reduces stress, anxiety and isolation and improves self-esteem. Reduced stress further decreases the risk of some physical and mental health problems, such as heart disease, stroke, depression, anxiety and general illness. In addition, people who volunteer have lower mortality rates than those who do not. You will have access to food grown without harmful chemicals,
- **Skills Development:** Learn new practical skills or practice and maintain the skills you already have. Learning gardening and food production, applying Permaculture principles and ethics, Carpentry and green woodworking skills, traditional land management practices (hedge-laying, coppicing, pruning, scything) use of hand tools, tool maintenance, learning medicinal properties of plants and their preparations, food preparation and cooking.
- **Career Growth:** Gain valuable experience that helps prepare you for the workplace or a new career path. Working in a team, on the land, with trees, plants, edibles, medicinal plants, soil health, mulches, polytunnel, ponds, hedges, berries, fruit, salves, planning, events, talks, posters and many more tasks all can boost your skill levels and confidence and capacity to gain employment.
- **Community and Fun:** Socialise, have fun with a diverse range of people. The team are very good at making you feel comfortable and welcome. We engender an environment of respect for each other. People often offer support, friendship, and activity ideas outside of the garden. So, it can be a place to expand your social wellbeing and find out what's going in the area around you.
- **Making an Impact:** Make a positive



contribution to the sustainability and well-being of the land and community. Creating a lasting legacy of abundance of food grown without: chemicals, flying, and plastic, with nature wellbeing at heart. Witness the garden's development, its beauty and abundance. Doing something meaningful can contribute to resilience against feelings of despair or overwhelm with how nature is being treated. Be around people who want to contribute and see the impact.

Our Mutual Agreement and Commitment

Your time with us is based on **trust and mutual understanding, not a legal contract**. This important difference gives both you and Naturewise the flexibility we need to thrive.

Our commitment to you:

- To have clear information about what is and is not expected of you
- To provide adequate support and training relevant to role
- To be insured and to provide a safe environment
- To treat you with respect and in a non-discriminatory manner
- To pay you out of pocket expenses
- To give you opportunities for personal development
- To recognise and appreciate you
- To enable you to say 'no' to anything which you consider to be unrealistic or unreasonable
- To know what to do if something goes wrong

Your Commitment to Naturewise:

- To be reliable and honest
- To uphold the organisation's values and comply with organisational policies
- To make the most of opportunities given, e.g. for training, mentoring etc.
- To contribute positively to the aims of the organisation and avoid bringing the organisation into disrepute
- To carry out tasks within agreed guidelines

How to join us – The recruitment process

We strive to make our volunteering opportunities welcoming, accessible, and safe for everyone in our community. We offer two main ways to get involved: Informal Drop-in and Formal Roles.

Informal Volunteering (Drop-in Garden Sessions)

This is the **easiest way to start** and how most people join us.

- **Joining Us:** Simply **turn up** at the garden on any scheduled volunteering day.
- **Induction:** When you arrive, we will give you a site tour and an on-the-spot induction.
- **Safety First:** We will ask you to fill in a short information form so we have your contact, health, and emergency contact details on file.
- **Choosing Your Tasks:** Every session, we put up a job board listing the tasks for the day. We encourage you to **choose what you would like to do**, ensuring it suits your needs and interests.

Formal and Specialist Roles

For roles that require more specialised skills (e.g., Administration) or involve greater responsibility, the process is more formal and includes:

1. Completing an application form.
2. An informal interview.
3. The taking of references.

Easy to Apply

You can easily apply using the **Volunteering Wales digital system**. If you prefer a non-digital method, simply phone, email or turn up at the garden with your ideas or thoughts.

[Welcome - Volunteering Wales](#)

Our Commitment to Fair Recruitment

Data Protection:

We take data protection seriously and store all personal data securely, ensuring it is only used for volunteer-related purposes and managed strictly in accordance with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) guidelines.

Equal Opportunities: We follow equal opportunities principles in all our recruitment, promoting roles widely in both English and Welsh (and other languages when needed). Our commitment extends throughout the volunteer experience, ensuring all individuals are treated fairly, valued, and free from discrimination based on any protected characteristic.

DBS Checks: Only volunteer roles for the office tasks require a DBS check. Volunteer roles at the Garden are not required. Office volunteers often handle addresses or bank details and this is the reason it is required for data protection.

We will arrange and cover the cost of a DBS disclosure check. All disclosures are handled with the strictest confidence. A past criminal record is not automatically a barrier to volunteering with us. We assess every situation carefully and fairly.

If Your Application is Not Successful: We'll provide constructive feedback and invite you to discuss other alternative roles or signpost you to the local volunteer centre or the Volunteering Wales website.

Volunteer Centre CAVO: [CAVO | CAVO promotes & supports voluntary community action throughout Ceredigion](#)

Volunteering Wales: [Welcome - Volunteering Wales](#)

Induction and Training

Induction

Volunteers will be given a comprehensive induction appropriate to their role. A member of staff will introduce you to Naturewise, give you a tour of the site, and ensure you meet the other volunteers. We will also cover essential site safety and explain how to use the activities board to choose your daily tasks. During the induction, there will be plenty of opportunities for you to ask questions. We make sure you know about:

- The compost toilet and the handwashing
- Taking care of your children on site.
- Hearing from you about your skills, capabilities, and any limitations and preferences you might have.
- We have a positive approach to how much you can and want to do. We value everyone's input into this productive and beautiful community forest garden.
- It's entirely up to you how much you do - please take care of your own body and energy.



- The volunteer coordinators job and how they will support you in selecting activities and doing a task and getting the appropriate tools.
- Using tools and equipment safely and induction to any you don't know about.
- Do not start a task unless you have agreed to it with the volunteer coordinator.
- Protective footwear, and other protective gear: gloves, goggles, ear defenders, for your protection.
- rubbish – what to do with it.
- lunch breaks, what we provide, bring your own drinking water and lunch.
- Please keep aware of your own limitations, there are always too many tasks to do in the garden but we must look after ourselves and sit down, drink water, keep out of very hot sunshine, or keep warm.
- housekeeping like clearing up after tea, washing up, getting things out ready for tea and sweeping the floor.
- Only people who have completed an induction to use the storm kettle can use it. If you're interested in this we'd be happy to show you.
- We have a risk assessment for the site and activities please ask to see this if you wish to.
- The safe guarding policy and other policies you can look at.
- Reimbursement for your travel, please talk to the volunteer coordinator.

Training

We ensure all volunteers have the training and support needed to carry out their roles effectively and safely.

On-the-Job Training (Most Roles)

For most roles, you will learn hands-on.

- **Who Trains You:** Training is provided by a staff member or an experienced volunteer.
- **Ongoing Support:** Someone will always be available to offer further guidance, advice, or a refresher.
- **Always Ask:** If you are ever unsure about a task, **please ask for assistance** - your safety and confidence are our priority.

Support, Supervision, and Feedback

We are committed to providing you with the necessary support to ensure a positive and safe volunteering experience.

Supervision and Check-Ins

You will receive support and supervision appropriate to your role. Check-in arrangements may vary but generally include:

- Informal **chats** during tea or lunch breaks
- **Occasional Team Gatherings** or meetings
- Communication via **email** or the **WhatsApp group**
- **An invitation for a One-to-One Discussion**

Feedback Mechanisms

We strongly encourage an **open dialogue** and value your input.

We have a feedback box where you can post any **feedback**, share ideas, make suggestions, or offer compliments.

Volunteers often discuss issues/ ideas and give feedback as they become more involved, because they see how things work and they want to participate or they have ideas they want to share. We have an open environment where a lot gets discussed and shared. Asking for time one to one to give feedback about something that feels uncomfortable is welcomed.

Recording Your Time (Signing In and Out)

We use a simple system for volunteers to record the time they contribute.

It is essential that you sign in and out during every session. We use this record to accurately report the impact of volunteer hours, which is vital for our funding reports and grant applications.

What to Bring

Please ensure you wear and bring the following essential items for your safety and comfort:

- **Sturdy, closed-toe footwear** (e.g., boots or strong trainers).
- Weather-appropriate clothing (we recommend layers).
- A reusable water bottle.

Amenities and Facilities

- We will show you during your induction where you can safely **store your personal items** and find shelter in case of poor weather. We are not responsible for volunteers' property & vehicles whilst onsite?
- Information regarding toilet and kitchen facilities will also be provided upon arrival.

Recognition and appreciation

We are immensely grateful for the time and dedication you give to Naturewise. We make sure your contribution is formally recognised throughout the year by:

Acknowledging tasks and achievements over a period of time through the newsletters which get posted on the website, writing up and posting photos on the Whats-app groups and the Facebook membership.

At events we formally thank volunteers. We have given small tokens of our appreciation through posters, cakes, invites, stews and barbeques.

Throughout the year, we host a variety of events to bring everyone together, including our annual open day and seasonal celebrations. We enjoy summer barbeques, Easter gatherings with egg dyeing and fried egg sandwiches, and sharing a hot stew with the Eco Shop volunteers. We also host storytelling events and performance opportunities, and we often enjoy group trips to visit other forest gardens, community projects, and local events.

Volunteers have the chance to learn green wood working skills for free at **Coppicewood college**, through Claire who was a teacher with the college for 8 years.



Our Commitment to Fairness

We are committed to maintaining a safe and respectful space for everyone. You will be fully informed during your induction about our procedure for addressing any form of inappropriate behaviour by volunteers or staff. This commitment ensures a welcoming and positive environment for all participants.

We also aim to make your overall volunteering experience rewarding. If a general problem or concern arises, please know that we have a clear, supportive process to address it quickly and confidentially.

Informal Resolution (First Step)

If an issue or concern arises, the simplest first step is often to discuss it informally with one of the volunteer coordinators.

The goal of this discussion is to find a fair, constructive solution, which may include: additional training, increased support or supervision, adjustment of your current tasks, or exploring a change of role.

Formal Complaints

If an informal chat does not resolve the issue:

The concern will be handled formally according to the organisation's Official Complaints Policy which can be found with all our policies in the round house.

Expenses and Benefits

Reimbursement of Expenses

Travel expenses will be reimbursed for travel related to your volunteering activity, but this is limited to travel within a **ten-mile radius** of the Naturewise Community Forest Garden.

How to Make a Claim: Please keep all relevant receipts and fill in the claim form provided.

Volunteering and Benefits

If you are in receipt of benefits, we understand that Job Centre Plus/ Department of Works and Pensions are supportive of customers volunteering. You are free to volunteer as much as you like, but you will need to seek their permission to volunteer. Please contact your local JCP/DWP office.

If you ever feel unsure or just want a confidential chat about volunteering and your benefits, contact the job centre or Citizens advice centre.

You can also find more information directly on the government website:
[Volunteering and claiming benefits - GOV.UK](#)

Keeping Everyone Safe: Policies and Guidelines

Organisational Policies Health and Safety

Naturewise strives to keep everyone safe by maintaining up-to-date policies and carrying out regular risk assessments. Detailed information on keeping yourself safe is outlined in the Health, Safety, and Emergency Procedures section. The full Health and Safety Policy and all risk assessments can be accessed in the round house.

Safeguarding

Naturewise is committed to creating a safe and welcoming environment for all, supported by formal policies, risk assessments, and a clear Code of Conduct. We have a trained Designated Safeguarding Lead who acts as the first point of contact, ensuring all volunteers know the correct procedures for promptly and confidentially reporting concerns.

Any concerns regarding safety or inappropriate behaviour must be reported immediately to the Safeguarding Lead: Claire Turner Claire@naturewise.org.uk

Environmental

We ask all volunteers to minimise waste and follow the garden's recycling and composting guidelines.

Please respect all wildlife and plants; leave the natural environment as you find it.



Smoking

The Naturewise Community Forest Garden is a non-smoking site. This includes e-cigarettes and vaping, which are not permitted anywhere on the premises.

Insurance information: We are insured with the NFU which covers building, employers' liability, and public liability covering volunteer activities on site.

Moving On

We understand that people move on to new adventures. If you decide your journey with Naturewise has come to an end, we want to make the transition helpful and smooth for everyone.

- **Feedback:** When you decide to leave, we'll ask you to complete a short **exit questionnaire**. This is your chance to share feedback on your time here, and we truly value your honest thoughts.
- **Requesting a Reference:** Volunteers who have been with our garden family for at least **three months** will have the right to request a reference from us.



Date approved	06/12/2025
Date of next review	December 2026
Person Responsible	Claire Turner