

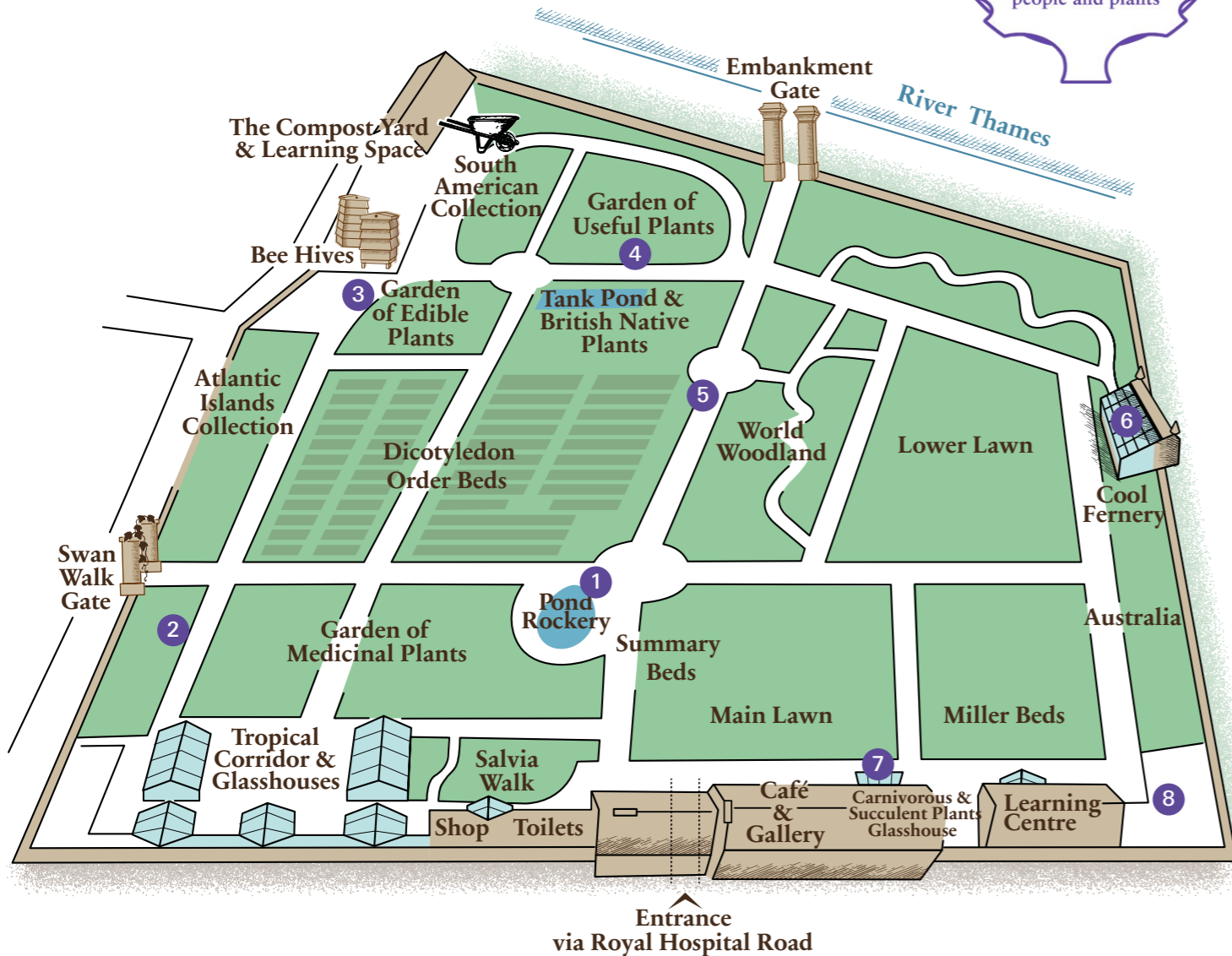
The background of the entire page is a lush field of lavender plants with green foliage and numerous purple flower spikes. A large, semi-circular purple graphic element is positioned in the top left, partially overlapping the lavender field.

A decorative white icon featuring a sun with a human-like face and radiating rays, flanked by two lavender sprigs with buds.

A Dash of Lavender

Celebrating diversity in people and plants

For **LGBTQ+** History Month, Chelsea Physic Garden celebrates diversity in both people and plants. Historically, the LGBTQ+ community has been labelled “unnatural”, yet the natural world is full of characteristics that defy societal norms and binaries. While societal norms often impose binary sex and gender onto nature, plant reproduction is far more complex and fluid, challenging simple male/female distinctions. As you explore the Garden, challenge yourself to reconsider what is “unnatural.” We are all part of nature, and nature is undeniably queer.



1. *Lavandula dentata*

Lavender has important links to **LGBTQ+** history. Since the turn of the 20th century, there has been a societal view that the colour pink is associated with girls and blue with boys. The colour lavender can be made by blending these two colours together. Its light purple flowers therefore represent the blurring between the masculine and feminine binary. Historically, flowers have been used to insult the **LGBTQ+** community, with gay men called “pansies” or said to have “a dash” or “a streak of lavender”. Like the majority of flowering plants, lavender has **bisexual** flowers. This means that they have both **pollen-producing** and **seed-producing** organs in the same flower.

2. Florilegium Pride Flag

This pride flag is based on the Intersex-inclusive Pride Progress Flag, which combines the traditional rainbow flag with additional colours and symbols to highlight underrepresented groups in the **LGBTQ+** community. The Chelsea Physic Garden Flag was created with Florilegium artwork based on the Garden’s plant collection and designed by artist Sixto-Juan Zavala. All the plants have connections to the **LGBTQ+** community or to life cycles that break typical western notions of gender and sexes.

3. *Daldinia concentrica*

If you look closely at this rotting wood, you’ll see several black lumps. These are the fruiting bodies of coal fungus, which produce spores to spread their offspring. Fungi reproduction is very different from plants and animals. Some fungi reproduce **asexually**, and some species have over 23,000 different sexes. Fungi can mate with other fungi by touching their thread-like roots, called hyphae.

4. Florilegium Artwork

The Chelsea Physic Garden Florilegium Society was established in 1995 with the aim to document plants growing in the Garden through painting and drawing. 2025 marks the 30th anniversary of the Society, and to celebrate, the Garden will spend the year exploring the connection between art and plants through a programme titled *A Brush with Nature*. Visit in March to see an exhibition in the Garden of 30 Florilegium Artworks. **Four** of the 800 Florilegium Society artworks are displayed here, representing plants that challenge some cultural perceptions of gender and sex.

5. *Ginkgo biloba*

Known as the maidenhair tree, ginkgo is one of the oldest living tree species, dating back over 270 million years. Ginkgo trees are **dioecious**, meaning individual trees are either **pollen-producing** or **seed-producing**. In the UK, **pollen-producing** ginkgoes are more commonly planted in cities as they don’t produce seeds. These seeds can cause a mess and have an unpleasant smell. However, long-term studies of ginkgo trees have found that they may develop seed bearing branches on mature pollen bearing trees. This means the “male” ginkgo trees lining London’s streets could start producing fruit. There is an example of this on one of the ginkgo trees on Royal Hospital Road outside Chelsea Physic Garden.

6. *Lunularia cruciata*

Known as the Crescent-cup Liverwort, this plant grows in damp, shaded spots. Unlike most plants, liverworts lack true roots, stems, or leaves, instead using tiny structures called rhizoids to anchor themselves. In the UK, this plant reproduces **asexually** through small, crescent-shaped structures called gemmae cups. These cups hold gemmae, tiny cell clusters that act as clones of the parent plant. When water splashes into the cups, it spreads the gemmae, which grow into new, identical plants. Take a closer look to spot the crescent-shaped cups.

7. *Opuntia engelmannii*

Prickly pears are cacti that thrive in dry environments. Most prickly pear species like *Opuntia engelmannii* are hermaphroditic, with **bisexual flowers** that contain both **pollen-producing** and **seed-producing** parts. However, some related species, such as *Opuntia robusta* are **trioecious**. This is where there are three types of sexual identity in a species: plants that make only pollen, plants that make only seeds, and hermaphroditic plants with flowers that produce both. Interestingly, researchers have found that hermaphroditic plants often have more spines than the single-sex ones. This extra protection may help safeguard their higher reproductive investment, as producing both seeds and pollen requires more resources than producing just one.

8. Gastropods

Carefully turn over the deadwood in this pile, and you may find slugs and snails. Their scientific name is Gastropods, meaning “stomach-foot”. These creatures are hermaphrodites, meaning each can both get pregnant and impregnate others. A typical garden can contain 200 slugs per square meter, though 95% of them will be underground.

What else to see?

In February, the Garden starts to awaken after the cold winter, heralding the arrival of spring. The amphibians migrate back to the Tank Pond, where they can sometimes be seen (and heard) mating. Look for clumps of frogspawn from mid-February.

The World Woodland features several winter flowering plants which are strongly scented. This helps to attract emerging flies and bees during a time when there are a few pollinators.

Lastly, make sure to warm up in the Tropical Corridor and Glasshouses and see plants from the southern hemisphere.

Trail curated by Connor Butler.

A Dash of Lavender Events



Queer Ecology Nature Walk
Sunday 2 February, 11am – 1pm

Queer Botanical Drawing
Sunday 9 February, 1pm – 4pm

**Queer Families: Myth Making
and Mono Printing**
Thursday 20 February, 10am – 12pm
and 2pm – 4pm

Psychedelic Queer Nature Printing
Thursday 20 February, 6.30pm – 9pm

Glossary

Pollen-producing organs are often described as “male”. These plants have a stamen, which holds the pollen, the plant equivalent of sperm.

Seed-producing organs are often described as “female”. These plants have a pistil, which contains seed-producing ovaries.

Bisexual flowers have both pollen-producing stamens and seed-producing pistil organs in the same flower. They are also called perfect, androgynous, hermaphrodite, or complete flowers.

Diocious plants are those where individuals are either pollen-producing or seed-producing, however some species are able to transition from one to the other.

Trioecious plant species have a mixed mating system, where a population can contain both pollen-producing plants, seed-producing plants, and hermaphroditic plants capable of producing both pollen and seeds.



Queer Poetry Night
Friday 21 February, 7pm – 9pm

**Myths, Mosses, Monsters
and Myxxghxhgsggh:
Queer Nature After Dark**

Wednesday 26 February,
6.30pm – 8.30pm

**Queer as Folklore Book Talk
with Sasha Coward**

Friday 28 February, 6.30pm – 8pm

Sexual reproduction is a process where two different parents produce an offspring which has a mixture of the parents’ genes.

Asexual reproduction describes reproduction where a new offspring is produced by a single parent, in contrast with sexual reproduction. In plants this can be done through self-propagating or self-pollinating, and in animals through parthenogenesis.

LGBTQ+ is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and other sexual and gender minorities. The term “Queer” originally meant “strange” or “peculiar” and was used as an insult to the LGBTQ+ community. It has now been reclaimed by activists and used as a positive umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities.

Become a Friend



Friends Categories

Associate Friend £39:

Free entry for one named cardholder

Friend £59:

Free entry for you and one guest per visit

Joint Friend £83:

Free entry for two named cardholders, with one guest each per visit

Family upgrade £93:

Bring up to four children aged 5 – 15 for free per visit, in addition to your guest

Life Friend from £1700:

Lifelong access to the Garden for you and a guest, available at single or joint levels

Friends Benefits

- Free, unlimited entry to the Garden for you and a guest
- 10% discount in our shop and exclusive offers in our cafe
- Exclusive access to the garden one hour before it opens to the general public
- Monthly coffee mornings
- Free entry to the annual Christmas Fair and other exclusive event discounts
- Free entry to our partner gardens
- Monthly e-newsletter containing Garden highlights, events and special offers

If you have questions regarding membership of the Garden, email us at friends@chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk, or call us on 0207 349 6471