

The Free Gardener

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE A.O.F.G. INC.

Cameron Browne

Caribbean Roots of
Free Gardening in NY

First Flower of Los Angeles
A.O.F.G. in California

St. Fiacre Lodge No. 11
Grant Us Wisdom

One Small Garden of a
Free Gardener

Edition II

Summer 2026

WEAR THE TRADITION

LIVE THE CRAFT

Rooted in history. Designed for today.
Apparel and goods for those
who cultivate character.

BUILT ON 1676 TRADITION

CRAFTED FOR MODERN BROTHERHOOD

The Ancient Order of Free Gardeners represents more than history—it represents growth, discipline, and the cultivation of the self.

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Wear what you stand for.
Plant the seeds of something greater.





Elevate Your Regalia.

Honor the Tradition—Without the Price.

Affordable. Refined. Built for those who carry the craft forward.

Why AB Regalia?

- Premium craftsmanship without premium pricing
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- Designed for distinction and presence

Step into Excellence.

Upgrade your regalia today.



EVERYDAY VIRTUES

A Guide for Personal Growth

By The Free Gardener Editorial Committee

Personal growth is often treated as something abstract—something you think about more than something you practice. But real transformation does not come from ideas alone. It comes from daily, intentional action.

The four core virtues—Love, Wisdom, Harmony, and Truth—offer a simple but powerful framework for structured personal development. When translated into everyday habits, they shape how you think, respond, and move through life. Practiced consistently, they produce tangible results: stronger relationships, better decision-making, emotional stability, and a deeper sense of self-respect. What follows is a practical, person-centered approach: a one-week cycle that turns these virtues into lived experience.



Love: Building Strength Through Intention

Love, in this context, is not passive or sentimental. It is active goodwill—the decision to show patience, compassion, and generosity even when it is not convenient. Practicing love begins with a simple shift in awareness. At the start of the day, ask yourself: “Where can I give—not just react—today?” This small question reframes your interactions. Instead of moving through the day defensively, you move through it with intention. Throughout the day, look for one opportunity to act deliberately: send a sincere message, offer encouragement, or help someone without being asked. These are small acts, but they build emotional discipline. They train you to respond rather than react.

At the end of the day, reflect honestly: “Did I act from love—or from ego, fear, or irritation?” Over time, this reflection reveals patterns. You begin to see where impatience creeps in, especially with those closest to you, and where you have the power to change it. The result is not just better relationships—it is greater internal control. You become less reactive, more patient, and more grounded in how you treat others.

Wisdom: Learning to Pause Before Acting

Wisdom is the discipline of thinking clearly before responding. It is what separates impulse from intention. Each morning, identify one situation where you are likely to react emotionally—a conversation, a stress point, or a recurring conflict. Commit to one simple rule: pause before responding.

“Is what I’m about to say helpful, necessary, and true?”

In that pause, ask yourself: “Is what I’m about to say helpful, necessary, and true?” This question acts as a filter. It slows you down just enough to choose your response rather than defaulting to habit. During the day, you will notice moments where your old patterns try to take over. That is where growth happens—not in avoiding mistakes, but in catching yourself mid-reaction and choosing differently. In the evening, reflect on one moment where you handled something better than you would have in the past. Also acknowledge where you fell short, not with judgment, but with curiosity: “What did this teach me?”

Over time, practicing wisdom leads to fewer unnecessary conflicts, better decisions—especially around money and relationships—and a growing sense of control over your life.

Harmony: Creating Balance Within

Harmony is the practice of balance. It is the ability to create order in your environment and calm within yourself. It begins with something simple: each morning, take five minutes to organize a small space—your desk, your bag, even your car. This is not about cleanliness alone. It is about sending a signal to yourself that you are capable of creating order (balance).

During the day, pause and check in: “What feels out of balance right now?” The answer might be physical, mental, or emotional. You may need to step away from your phone, take a short walk, or simply drink water and reset. The key is to adjust one thing, not everything. In the evening, spend five minutes in silence. No distractions, no input. Just stillness. This practice trains your mind to slow down and recalibrate.

Truth: Living with Honesty and Integrity

Truth is often the most difficult virtue to practice, because it requires courage. It asks you to confront what is real—especially when it is uncomfortable.

Start the day with a direct question: “Where am I avoiding truth in my life?” The answer may involve a relationship, a habit, or a decision you have been putting off. During the day, choose one act of honesty. This could mean admitting a mistake without excuse, having a conversation you have been avoiding, or acknowledging something to yourself that you have been denying.

Truth is not about harshness—it is about clarity. It removes the mental strain that comes from avoidance and replaces it with direction. At the end of the day, reflect: “Did I live honestly today—even when it was uncomfortable?” Over time, these small acts of truth build a strong foundation of self-respect. You trust yourself more because you are no longer hiding from reality.

The Power of a One-Week Practice

When practiced together over the course of a week, these virtues begin to reinforce one another. Love softens your interactions. Wisdom sharpens your decisions. Harmony stabilizes your environment. Truth grounds you in reality. At the end of the week, take time to reflect:

- Where did you grow the most?
- What patterns did you notice in your behavior?
- Which virtue challenged you the most—and why?
- What will you carry forward into the next week?

This reflection is where awareness turns into progress.

Weekly Routine

FOR

Personal Growth

Small daily choices. Stronger you.



<p>1</p> <p>LOVE</p> <p>Building Strength Through Care and Intention</p>	<p> MORNING</p> <p>Ask yourself: "Where can I give—not just react—today?"</p> <hr/> <p>Set the intention to move through the day with care. </p>	<p> DURING THE DAY</p> <p>Look for one opportunity to act with love:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send a kind message • Offer encouragement • Help someone without being asked <p>Act deliberately, not reactively.</p>	<p> EVENING</p> <p>Reflect honestly: "Did I act from love—or from ego, fear, or irritation?"</p> <hr/> <p>Notice patterns. Choose to respond better tomorrow. </p>
<p>2</p> <p>WISDOM</p> <p>Learning to Pause Before Acting</p>	<p> MORNING</p> <p>Identify one situation where you're likely to react emotionally.</p> <hr/> <p>Commit to one rule:</p> <p>PAUSE BEFORE RESPONDING. </p>	<p> DURING THE DAY</p> <p>In the pause, ask: "Is what I'm about to say helpful, necessary, and true?"</p> <hr/> <p>Catch yourself mid-reaction. Choose your response with intention. </p>	<p> EVENING</p> <p>Reflect on one moment you handled better than in the past.</p> <p>Acknowledge where you fell short with curiosity: "What did this teach me?" </p>
<p>3</p> <p>HARMONY</p> <p>Creating Balance Within and Around You</p>	<p> MORNING</p> <p>Spend 5 minutes organizing a small space (desk, bag, car, etc.).</p> <hr/> <p>Send a signal to yourself: I create order and balance. </p>	<p> DURING THE DAY</p> <p>Pause and check in: "What feels out of balance right now?"</p> <hr/> <p>Adjust one thing—not everything. </p>	<p> EVENING</p> <p>Spend 5 minutes in silence.</p> <hr/> <p>No distractions. No input. Just stillness. </p>
<p>4</p> <p>TRUTH</p> <p>Living with Honesty and Integrity</p>	<p> MORNING</p> <p>Ask yourself: "Where am I avoiding truth in my life?" </p>	<p> DURING THE DAY</p> <p>Choose one act of honesty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admit a mistake • Have the hard conversation • Acknowledge the truth to yourself <p>Truth is clarity, not harshness. </p>	<p> EVENING</p> <p>Reflect: "Did I live honestly today—even when it was uncomfortable?"</p> <p>Build self-respect through truth. </p>

END OF THE WEEK: REFLECT & GROW

<p>Where did you grow the most?</p>	<p>What patterns did you notice in your behavior?</p>	<p>Which virtue challenged you the most—and why?</p>	<p>This reflection is where awareness turns into progress. </p>
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THE POWER OF A ONE-WEEK PRACTICE

<p>Love softens your interactions.</p>	<p>Wisdom sharpens your decisions.</p>	<p>Harmony stabilizes your environment.</p>	<p>Truth grounds you in reality.</p>
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A.O.F.G. | Tending Our Own Garden



The worldwide revival of Free Gardenerly has brought with it renewed enthusiasm, research, discussion, and fellowship among many branches and traditions of the Order. Across Scotland, North America, Europe, Africa, Australia, and beyond, men and women inspired by the ancient craft of gardening as a metaphor for moral and spiritual cultivation have worked to preserve and restore the traditions of the Free Gardeners. In this growing movement, it is natural that discussions arise concerning lineage, legitimacy, ritual customs, symbolism, and historical interpretation. Such debates are not unique to Free Gardenerly; nearly every historic fraternal tradition experiences similar conversations as members seek to understand their roots and preserve what they hold sacred.

Within the Ancient Order of Free Gardeners, however, the position of the United Council remains clear and steady: our focus must remain upon the work of the A.O.F.G. and the cultivation of our own garden. The lineage and continuity of the Ancient Order of Free Gardeners stand unquestioned within our Order, and our efforts are directed not toward controversy, but toward the preservation and practice of the traditions entrusted to us. We respect our fellow Free Gardeners of all branches and traditions, and we acknowledge the sincere labor many undertake to preserve the broader heritage of the Craft. Yet our duty as members of the Ancient Order of Free Gardeners is not to become entangled in disputes over recognition, precedence, or jurisdiction. Rather, our obligation is to faithfully practice the teachings, customs, and virtues of the Order to which we belong.

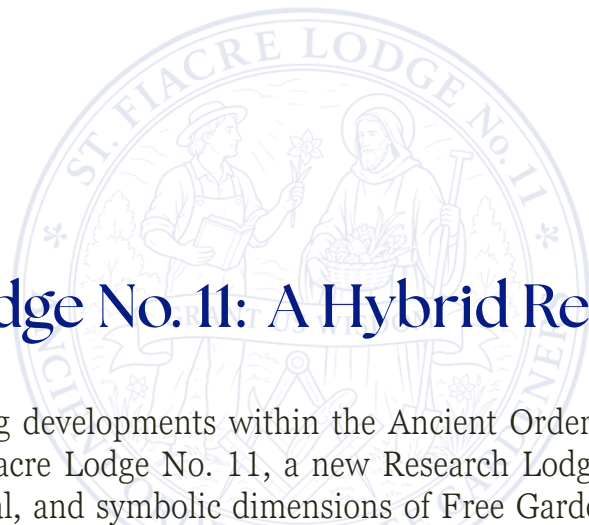
“A wise gardener spends little time judging another garden. Tend your own soil, pull your own weeds, and nurture what has been entrusted to your care. When your garden is flourishing, there is nothing left to prove—only growth, peace, and the quiet satisfaction of a life well cultivated.”

This is where our energy should remain centered. Not in endless debate, but in meaningful labor. Not in division, but in fraternity. Not in proving ourselves superior to others, but in proving ourselves faithful to the principles we profess. We may encounter differing opinions from fellow Free Gardeners throughout the world, and undoubtedly many of them feel just as strongly about their own traditions as we do about ours. That is their right, and it should be respected with courtesy and brotherly regard.

The garden flourishes when each gardener fulfills his own duty with patience and care. If we continue to uphold Love, Wisdom, Harmony, and Truth; if we continue to practice charity, stewardship, fellowship, and self-improvement; if we continue to cultivate the garden within ourselves and our communities, then the Ancient Order of Free Gardeners will continue to grow strong roots for generations yet to come.

As Free Gardeners, let us therefore remain focused upon our labor, united in purpose, respectful toward others, and ever mindful that the truest testimony of our Order is not found in argument, but in the fruit we bear.





St. Fiacre Lodge No. 11: A Hybrid Research Lodge

Among the most exciting developments within the Ancient Order of Free Gardeners is the commissioning of St. Fiacre Lodge No. 11, a new Research Lodge dedicated to the deeper intellectual, philosophical, and symbolic dimensions of Free Gardening. After reviewing the proposed framework and vision for the Lodge, one cannot help but come away impressed by both the seriousness of its mission and the thoughtfulness behind its design.

Named after St. Fiacre (fee-AH-kruh) — the patron saint of gardeners, healers, and cultivators — the Lodge seeks to embody the very principles that have always stood at the heart of Free Gardening: humility, stewardship, contemplation, labor, and wisdom. Rather than functioning as a traditional degree-conferring lodge, St. Fiacre Lodge No. 11 is envisioned as a cultivated garden of scholarship and reflection for Master Gardeners devoted to preserving and advancing the intellectual heritage of the Order.

The scope of the Lodge is particularly impressive. Planned programs include lectures, symposiums, historical research, symbolic studies, archival preservation, and philosophical discussions centered on horticultural symbolism, moral cultivation, Free Gardener history, and contemplative traditions. The proposal reflects a rare balance between historical grounding and thoughtful inquiry — preserving the dignity of the Ancient Order of Free Gardeners while encouraging serious scholarship and disciplined exploration.

Equally noteworthy is the Lodge's intention to serve not only Master Gardeners, but the wider Free Gardening community. While certain sessions will remain reserved for Master Gardeners, selected educational programs and lectures will also be open to Apprentices, Journeymen, and even the public. This creates a unique opportunity for the Order to share its philosophical and historical traditions in a careful and dignified manner while encouraging deeper study among newer members.

In many ways, St. Fiacre Lodge No. 11 feels like a natural evolution of Free Gardening itself. Throughout history plants and animals adapt to their environment and the ever changing climate. The hybrid research lodge will grant access to members who otherwise may not have the means to attend the lectures and presentations hosted by St. Fiacre Lodge. If the Lodge fulfills the vision laid out in its founding proposal, it may well become one of the most intellectually significant bodies within the modern revival of the Ancient Order of Free Gardeners in North America.

First Flower of LOS ANGELES

By Bro. Daniel L. Gutierrez



When we began discussing the formation of an Ancient Order of Free Gardeners lodge in Los Angeles, one of the first questions we asked ourselves was what we wanted our lodge to represent. Especially here in Los Angeles, a city full of diversity and multiple cultures. After much discussion, we chose the name "First Flower of Los Angeles."

The name reflects our position as the first Free Gardeners lodge established in Los Angeles and among the first efforts to introduce and cultivate the principles of Free Gardening within California. We felt that "First Flower" was an appropriate name because a flower is often the first visible sign of growth. It represents the beginning of something that, with proper care and dedication, can continue to develop and spread.

One of the principles that distinguishes Our beautiful Ancient Order of Free Gardeners is our commitment to the participation of both men and women, allowing Brothers and Sisters to labor together in harmony within the Garden. During the establishment of First Flower of Los Angeles, the members came together to elect the first officers of the Lodge. Sister Amanda Mendez was elected as the first Worthy Master, and Brother Robert N. as Emissary Master.

Their election reflects our belief that leadership, dedication, and service are not determined by gender, but by character and commitment. With enthusiasm, ambition, and a genuine desire to help cultivate the growth of our Lodge, Worthy Master Amanda Mendez and Emissary Master Robert N. have embraced the tools and teachings of the Free Gardeners and accepted the responsibility of guiding First Flower of Los Angeles.

Our vision as a Lodge is for the First Flower of Los Angeles to serve as a starting point, a pillar, and a seed for future growth toward a greener Los Angeles. We hope that additional lodges will eventually be established throughout Los Angeles and California. Since the establishment of First Flower Lodge, there has been interest from potential candidates. We also have several members within the Lodge who may one day establish their own lodges in their respective cities, such as Fresno, Temecula, and Oakland, allowing more people to discover the teachings, fellowship, and traditions of Free Gardening.



The men and women of the First Flower of Los Angeles bring different experiences, perspectives, talents, and strengths. By working together, we strengthen our lodge and better reflect the diversity of the communities we serve.

As members of First Flower of Los Angeles, we seek to create an environment where friendship, mutual respect, education, and personal growth can flourish. We strive to build a lodge that welcomes individuals from different backgrounds while remaining united by common values of compassion, service, and self improvement.

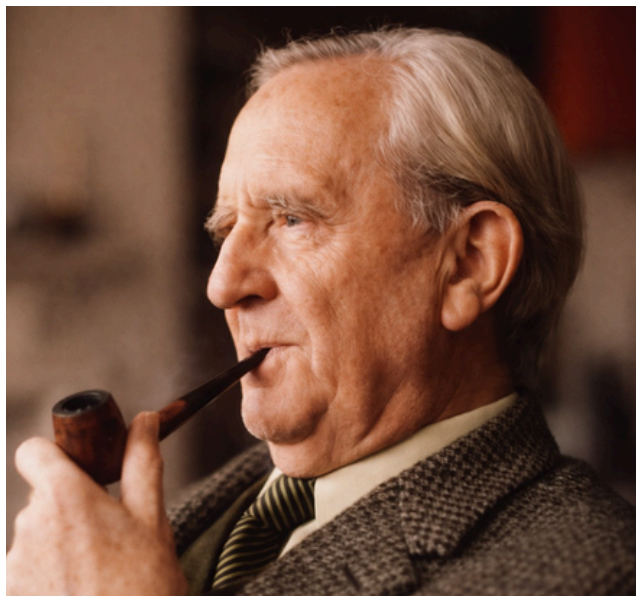
Although our lodge is still young, we look toward the future with optimism. Every Lodge begins somewhere, and every tradition is carried forward by those willing to dedicate their time and effort to its growth. We are proud of what has been established so far and look forward to seeing what future Lodges of Free Gardeners will build upon the foundation being laid today. The First Flower of Los Angeles is more than a name. It is a reminder that every lasting institution begins with a single effort, a single idea, and a small group of dedicated people willing to help maintain our beautiful Garden flourishing

*Los
angeles*

One of the field's aims consists of the systematic attention to what people (essentially or characteristically) have in mind about the topic of life's meaning. For many in the field, "importance" and "significance" are synonyms of "meaningfulness and significance" but there are those who are insufficiently revealing, but there are those who are revealing. (Landman, 145-50, 186). There is a sense in which the life relates to the ideas of Feinberg (1955) and (Landman, 1955) in mind where life means me, who, more, 1-

One Small Garden of a FREE GARDENER

By The Free Gardener Editorial Committee



Among the many memorable lines found in the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien, few resonate more deeply with modern Free Gardeners than the reflection spoken through Samwise Gamgee in *The Return of the King*:

“The one small garden of a free gardener was all his need and due, not a garden swollen to a realm; his own hands to use, not the hands of others to command.”

Though Tolkien was not writing specifically about the historical fraternity of Free Gardeners, the symbolism contained within this passage feels remarkably familiar to the philosophy and spirit of the Craft. The line appears during one of Samwise Gamgee’s moments of temptation by the One Ring. For a brief instant, Sam imagines himself becoming “Samwise the Strong,” a heroic ruler capable of transforming the barren lands of Mordor into a vast kingdom of gardens and beauty. Yet he ultimately rejects the vision.

Deep within himself, Sam realizes that he was never meant to dominate others or command great realms. His true happiness lay in tending his own humble garden with his own hands.

On a metaphorical level, Tolkien’s passage speaks directly to the dangers of pride, ambition, and the lust for power. Throughout *The Lord of the Rings*, the Ring symbolizes domination — the desire to control, command, and reshape the world according to one’s own will. Nearly every character who encounters it is tempted by visions of greatness. Sam’s temptation is unique because it begins with something noble: the desire to heal and restore broken land. Yet even that good intention becomes corrupted when tied to power and domination. Tolkien suggests that even beautiful dreams can become dangerous when they grow beyond humility and stewardship into control over others.

This is where the concept of the “free gardener” becomes especially meaningful. Sam’s rejection of power is not weakness — it is wisdom. He understands that there is dignity in small things: tending the earth, caring for one’s community, nurturing life, and fulfilling one’s duty without seeking glory or dominion. Tolkien presents the gardener not as insignificant, but as profoundly noble. In many ways, Samwise Gamgee becomes the moral center of the story precisely because he remains grounded in ordinary life, loyalty, labor, and love.

Tolkien himself openly identified with this philosophy. In one of his letters, he famously wrote: “I am in fact a Hobbit...” and expressed his love for “gardens, trees, and unmechanized farmlands.”

His writings consistently elevate gardeners, cultivators, and caretakers as symbols of virtue and sanity in a world increasingly consumed by machinery, greed, war, and industrial domination. The Shire itself represents an ideal of peaceful stewardship — a society rooted in community, simplicity, and harmony with nature. By contrast, the dark powers of Middle-earth seek to industrialize, consume, and dominate the natural world.



For modern Free Gardeners, Tolkien’s words carry a lesson that extends far beyond literature. The “one small garden” can be understood as the life entrusted to each of us: our character, our family, our lodge, our community, and the moral garden within our own soul. The metaphor reminds us that true fulfillment does not come from ruling over others, seeking titles, or building empires, but from cultivating virtue through steady and honest labor.

The phrase “his own hands to use, not the hands of others to command” is especially striking when viewed through the lens of Free Gardening philosophy. It affirms the dignity of personal labor and stewardship. A true gardener works with the soil directly. He does not merely issue commands from afar; he participates in the labor of cultivation himself. In this sense, Tolkien’s free gardener represents humility, independence, responsibility, and harmony with creation itself.

The symbolism also reflects one of the central truths long taught within Free Gardenerly: that growth occurs slowly, quietly, and organically. Gardens cannot be forced into greatness overnight. They must be cultivated patiently through discipline, care, and wisdom. Likewise, the human soul cannot be perfected through domination or ambition, but only through steady cultivation of Love, Wisdom, Harmony, and Truth.

In an age increasingly obsessed with influence, spectacle, and power, Tolkien’s vision of the “free gardener” feels more relevant than ever. Samwise Gamgee reminds us that there is honor in tending what is before us faithfully. The humble gardener may never command armies or kingdoms, yet through his care, life continues to flourish. And perhaps that is Tolkien’s deeper lesson: the world is often preserved not by those who seek to rule it, but by those willing to quietly cultivate it.



CARIBBEAN ROOTS OF FREE GARDENING IN NY

By The Free Gardener Editorial Committee

The history of Free Gardenerly in North America cannot be fully understood without recognizing the important role played by the Caribbean, particularly Barbados and the wider British West Indies. Historical records show that the British Order of Free Gardeners became established in Barbados in 1887 alongside other friendly societies such as the Odd Fellows and Ancient Order of Foresters. These organizations became important centers of fellowship, mutual aid, and moral instruction among working-class communities throughout the British Caribbean, especially among the Afro-Caribbean community, during the colonial era.



Bro. Cameron Browne - Gopher Flower Lodge No. 462 - Harlem, NY

As large numbers of West Indians migrated to cities such as New York during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they carried their churches, customs, and fraternal traditions with them. Alongside organizations like the Odd Fellows and Knights of Pythias, Caribbean migrants also brought the traditions of the British Order of Ancient Free Gardeners into North America (B.O.A.F.G.). One of the figures who emerges from this overlooked chapter of history is Brother Cameron L. Browne, an officer of the British Order of Ancient Free Gardeners in New York City during the early twentieth century.

A remarkable surviving record appears in a New York property transaction involving Gopher Flower Lodge No. 462 of the British Order of Ancient Free Gardeners. The document states that for the consideration of \$11,500, a property located at 17 West 120th Street in New York City was sold to “Gopher Flower Lodge, 462, British Order of Ancient Free Gardeners, Inc.” The record further identifies Brother Cameron L. Browne as secretary of the lodge, listing his residence as 2,512 7th Avenue. This seemingly ordinary legal notice speaks volumes about the strength and organization of the Order during that period. It demonstrates that Free Gardener lodges were not merely informal clubs, but incorporated institutions capable of purchasing and maintaining property in one of America’s largest cities.

Additional evidence of the lodge's activity appears in the September 1932 issue of *The Crisis*, the magazine of the NAACP. Among a long list of donations from African American fraternal organizations and civic groups appears an entry for "Gopher Flower Lodge No. 462, B.O.A.F.G." contributing five dollars toward the cause. Though modest in amount, the donation places the lodge within the broader network of Black fraternal activism and community support during the era of the Great Depression. It also confirms that the initials "B.O.A.F.G." — British Order of Ancient Free Gardeners — were publicly recognized at the time.

Brother Cameron L. Browne's role as secretary suggests he was one of the key administrative leaders responsible for preserving the continuity and operation of the lodge. Secretaries in fraternal societies often served as the institutional memory of their organizations, maintaining records, correspondence, finances, membership rolls, and legal matters. Through his work, Browne helped ensure that the traditions of Free Gardening survived within the growing West Indian communities of New York.

The story of Brother Browne and Gopher Flower Lodge also challenges modern assumptions about the history of Free Gardening in North America. Too often, the contributions of Caribbean Free Gardeners have been forgotten or overlooked despite their documented presence and organizational activity. Yet these brothers and sisters were part of a living continuation of the Craft — preserving ritual, fellowship, and mutual aid far from the islands where many of them were born.

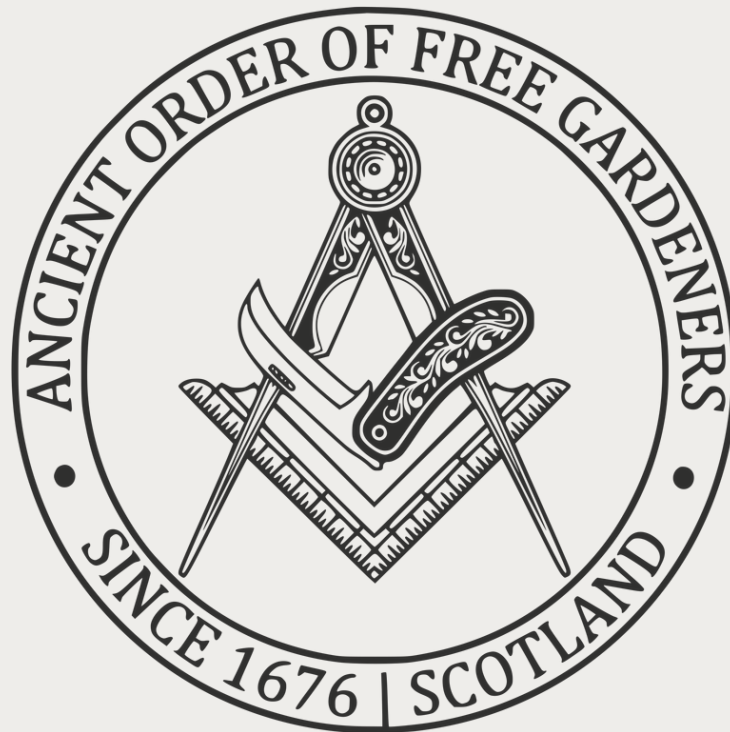
For members of the Ancient Order of Free Gardeners today, this history offers both inspiration and perspective. It reminds us that the garden of our fraternity has always been international in character, nourished by many hands, cultures, and experiences. From Scotland to Barbados, from Jamaica to Harlem, the principles of Love, Wisdom, Harmony, and Truth found fertile soil wherever Free Gardeners gathered in brotherhood.

The labor of Brother Cameron L. Browne and the members of Gopher Flower Lodge No. 462 stands as part of that enduring legacy. Though time has obscured many details of their meetings and ceremonies, the surviving records testify that they worked diligently in the vineyard of fraternity, cultivating fellowship and mutual aid for their community during a transformative era in North American history.

As modern Free Gardeners continue the revival of the Craft, may we remember and honor those earlier gardeners — especially those whose stories have too often remained hidden beneath the soil of history.

Become.

The Ancient Order of Free Gardeners Inc.



SUMMER 2026

SUBMISSIONS

If you would like to submit a piece for consideration in the Fall 2026 edition you can submit a draft of your article at info.freegardeners@gmail.com