



horticap 
Growing Together



Supporting and educating
at Bluecoat Wood Nurseries

www.horticap.org



Issue 1 2024

2024 AND WE ARE CELEBRATING HORTICAP AT 40!

Who would have thought that when the concept for a facility for adults with learning disabilities which revolved around horticulture was born, that 40 years later it would still be in existence? Not only that, but Horticap has thrived, and developed to be able to support more and more students, with an increasing range of purposeful activities.

So, it is with enormous pride that we invite our friends, supporters and visitors to join us in a year of birthday celebrations! Our aim is to offer engaging and fun events to highlight the wonderful work of our students, as well as raising important funds to help see us into the next 40 years! Our newsletters will continue to keep you up to date with current news, but will also look back on the last 40 years. We hope you enjoy reading about us!



However, we couldn't possibly have our first newsletter of 2024 without at least one picture of our fabulous students' Christmas party! We are very lucky to now have the perfect venue to enable us to hold this event, and that we have amazing staff, volunteers and trustees that all pull together to provide a delicious lunch, presents for all and entertainment that keeps us all laughing! Special thanks also go to the Fire Service and Harrogate Lions who popped in.



December 2023 also saw the completion of our new arts and crafts workshop, which is situated at the far end of the site. We are already benefitting from this fantastic new facility and are looking forward to the development of the garden to the front of it, in which we are planning to include a wildflower meadow. Our bees are very important to us with the honey they produce being popular with our customers. We hope the bees appreciate our plans!



But we never lose sight of horticulture being at the heart of Horticap, which can be easily seen by the wonderful selection of quality plants for sale in the greenhouse. Our students work very hard to learn their trade, and are proud that their "horticultural capabilities" ensures that Horticap plants are seen all over Harrogate and the surrounding areas.

The Spring brings our busy bedding plant period and in preparation, the blue greenhouse has been cleaned and cleared ready for the first delivery of plug plants and seeds that our students plant up and care for until they are ready for sale.



Our students continue to gain valuable skills and experience through their time working in both Hopkins@Horticap and our shop. They are also always proud to represent Horticap in all manner of occasions off site, both professionally and socially.

2024 at Horticap is going to be a wonderful year, celebrating 40 years of horticulture, hard work and friendship. In addition to our exciting events here, we hope that we will also see you all at the Harrogate Spring Flower Show, as well as The Great Yorkshire Show. We can't wait to unveil our celebratory garden!



Our website is under development, but please do visit it as it contains some very interesting information about how Horticap has progressed through the 40 years. Along with social media, it is also the place to find details of how to get involved in our celebrations. We hope to see you soon!

The Horticap Team



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News from our new Art Workshop



Many of our students really enjoy doing craft work, so we are all thrilled to have The West Wing, our new arts and crafts workshop, at the far end of the site. However, before the building arrived, the area needed a lot of ground work doing, which required us to hire a digger, dumper and roller for the preparatory work.

During the summer of 2023, we were delighted to welcome Mel, a student from Harrogate College, who offered to do a clay workshop with a group of students. Will, Hannah and Victoria were shown how to make clay tiles which they then decorated. It was a very successful 3-day workshop which was enjoyed enormously, and we would like to thank Mel very much for giving up her time.



It was all hands on deck to complete this enormous task. There was earth to move, paths to create and the construction of the all-important base frame, made by Jack, our expert woodworker.



It was hard work digging trenches and moving the frame into place!



With a lovely sunny aspect, The West Wing is now OPEN!



It is always impressive to see how our students rise to the many challenges presented to them at Horticap, and this project was no exception. We were all excited to watch the progress made, the effort and enthusiasm showed by everyone in building the art room, and we are now enjoying seeing the wonderful creations made by our students!



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The West Wing – Horticap’s latest addition!



The West Wing, our new arts and crafts workshop, is named in memory of Julian West who loved gardening. We have been incredibly fortunate to benefit from various donations, fundraising events and a generous legacy from Julian’s estate, enabling us to build it.

Julian took up gardening, growing colourful and spectacular flowers in his garden in Pool in Wharfedale, and filling the house with beautiful blooms. He was a self-taught gardener and at his happiest in the garden, often working overnight with a head torch and headphones listening to his favourite music! He was a passionate gardener and plantsman and also a very compassionate person, keen to help others whether that be working as a Dentist with Aboriginal communities in Australia, or being on the frontline taking calls with Childline.

We are sure that Julian would be delighted to see the The West Wing bringing the joy of crafts and gardening to fellow gardeners!



We are also delighted that Julian is remembered in our own lovely garden by the inclusion of a garden bench. And who else should paint it in a big and bold way but Hannah?

So what else are we up to in Spring?

This time of year is really the ‘calm before the storm’ at Horticap. On the nursery, it’s the ideal time to freshen up the planters, scope new jobs and generally stay out of the cold and wet if necessary! Our wood workshop has had a good tidy, as has our fabulous Nature Trail. Generally though, it’s the perfect time to catch up on those little jobs that are difficult to fit in when the season launches itself.



Of course, Hopkins and our lovely shop are always busy, but Chris and his team are finding the time to create delicious new dishes for the menu, and Pat is showing some of the attractive new gifts and items that Carol has carefully sourced, to sell in the shop. What is always guaranteed, is a warm welcome from the staff teams, and the students who work alongside them.



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Student Focus: Alex

Alex has attended Horticap since October 2010, coming 2 days a week. He is a valued student who attends with support staff, which enables Alex to join in with any job or activity presented to him.



He can often be found in the workshop, but is equally content being out on a contract job or being creative in the arts and crafts workshop. Alex is skillful, thorough and consistent with all aspects of his work but one thing's for sure, Alex likes nothing better than being busy!



The Great Horticap 6 x 6 Silent Artist Auction

In honour of our 40th year, we will be holding an Artist 6 x 6 Silent Auction.

With predominantly local artists, there will be a mixture of more well-known personalities (names to be confirmed) who will all donate anonymous pieces of work. Bids are invited from £25.

The aim of the silent auction is to promote Horticap its diversity and inclusivity of all who come into contact with our charity, students, staff, volunteers, customers & supporters to help raise much needed funds of £400,000 for a new student area and greenhouse.

The auction is open to everyone who wishes to take part, just pick up a numbered envelope from our shop containing 300gsm 6" x 6" watercolour paper. Paint, draw, collage a piece of art work (as long as the work is kept at a size of 6" x 6" any mediums can be used). Fill in the entrance form provided and drop back the completed art work back into the shop before 31st May 2024

Envelopes with blank 6"x 6" paper will be available from 1st March 2024

The exhibition with all entrants will run from 1st July 2024 until 1st September 2024 and will be available to view upstairs in our café. Silent bids can be done in person or over the phone on 01423 522876 EX 3

Important Dates:

1st March 2024 - Envelopes become available

31st May 2024 - Closing Day for dropping off art work

1st July 2024 - Exhibition & Bidding Opens

1st September - Bidding Ends

Week Beginning 16th September - Winners Contacted & Collection

Any enquiries please contact Carol Sowden on above telephone number.

Stunning Perennials

Just like the fashion industry, the Horticap Nursery Team is always planning at least a year ahead. The majority of plants that we sell are all grown on site by our amazing green fingered students, having arrived as young plants in plugs or in small pots.



We source our young stock selectively, and mainly from growers in the UK, but this selection of unusual and choice perennials and ferns have been delivered from young plant growers distributed throughout Belgium and The Netherlands.



“We aim to help students extend their knowledge and skills, through structured training using professionally qualified staff and volunteers”



Our students, with the aid of our wonderful volunteers, started the huge task of repotting these quality young plants last summer and are taking care of them so they are in tip top condition for going on sale this spring and summer.



In addition to our fantastic range of plants, our greenhouse has lots of lovely pots and other gardening accessories to choose from.

Horticap students care for in excess of 10,000 young perennials and shrubs each year, which keeps them very busy! Their skill and attention to detail in plant care is second to none, giving them a profound sense of pride in their work. As with all sales made at Horticap, the profits from the plant sales go back into the charity to support our ethos of growing people and plants.

Not only are our students accomplished at plant work, they also helped to build the extension to accommodate the increasing demand for perennials and shrubs!



Looking to improve all the time!





Horticap at 40



Message from our Chair, Peter Hornby

2024 is a very special year for Horticap as we celebrate our 40th anniversary of helping people to grow... growing together. We set out in 1984 with the simple belief that the lives of our students could be enhanced by connecting with nature through the horticultural skills they learn at Horticap. Our students are Horticap's unsung heroes who have contributed to 40 years' of growth.

We'd like to celebrate our anniversary year by improving the facilities that we provide for our students. The Mess Room is where our students gather together during the working day and is now in need of refurbishment. Our fundraising efforts this year will therefore go towards a better, greener space for our students together with improved locker, kitchen and toilet facilities.

I hope you'll be able to support our fundraising efforts, you can donate directly in the shop area or online through our website (www.horticap.org) which outlines the many ways in which you can support Horticap in this important year. All donations however small or large will be very much appreciated and will go directly to supporting our most important people, our students.



1984... the year that Horticap was created as an independent charity in Harrogate, to provide training in horticulture for adults with learning disabilities. However, it would be another two years of fundraising, and finding and acquiring a suitable site before Horticap could welcome students through its gates.

This ambitious idea came from a group of parents who wanted their children, who had learning disabilities, to have access to a different kind of provision than was traditionally available. Ambitious, because at the time, provision for young people with special needs on leaving education would have been limited to attending traditional training centres, special hospital facilities or remaining with parents or relatives. It was with this limited provision in mind that prompted them to explore alternatives, in this case horticulture. The seed was sown!



Horticap welcomes its first students. It may be a surprise to many visitors today that initially, the site was no more than a muddy field standing on a clay belt with fallen trees, no pond and no buildings, in fact the first building was a green caravan!

However, with determination and ambition, the transformation gradually started. The pond was dug out, trees were planted, paths were laid and buildings started to appear and all achieved by the growing number of students.

Original ideas for the site included developing it as a market garden serving Harrogate's numerous hotels and restaurants, then becoming a plant growing nursery, complimented with other horticultural related crafts such a dried flowers and woodwork, which enabled year round work for the students.



Horticap has continued to grow and develop since 1984 and is proud to provide a place of work for over fifty students, all with learning disabilities, on our four-acre site, and within the local Harrogate community.

Our students grow and care for all the plants that we sell, keep the gardens well-tended and always create a special welcoming atmosphere for everyone who comes to Horticap. We have an active off site trade in garden maintenance and our Show Gardens are legendary!

From the days of a green caravan in the middle of a muddy field, the Horticap site now includes a beautiful garden and nature trail, multiple glasshouses, several mess rooms, a wood workshop, an arts and crafts facility, office space, a lovely shop and of course, our wonderful café, Hopkins@Horticap.

We've certainly come a long way and our aim remains the same – to provide our students with a supportive, purposeful and friendly working environment in which they can develop their horticultural, social and communication skills and where they can enjoy themselves in the process.

The front cover of this newsletter, is of one of our very first students, Stephen Green. Stephen's parents were part of the small group of people who were instrumental in setting Horticap up. Sadly, his Father, John, died some years ago, but we feel very privileged that his Mother, Cathy, agreed to share some of her memories of the early days.

As a Mum of five, Cathy's main role was "at home looking after the kids", with John spending a lot of time up at the land that was to become the Horticap site. Cathy remembers the first time that John brought her up to the field and seeing "trees fallen down and a rusting caravan".

John worked at the Dental Hospital in Leeds at the time, but took early retirement to dedicate his time to Horticap's development, and Cathy remembers John being "proud of what was happening". She mentioned several students who worked alongside Stephen from the beginning, Paul O'Brien (who sadly died last year), and Timothy Simpson, who still attends every week. They laboured long and hard to clear the field and put a shed up in order to grow and harvest dried flowers, which Cathy "thought would sell".

John and Cathy both shared a passion for enabling a purposeful, working life to those who were physically able but had learning difficulties. With a principle of a day's pay for a day's work, Cathy is delighted that Horticap still has the "same concept as when it started" as their "pay packet is so important". Every year, Stephen renovates the bench dedicated to his Father, "Mr Horticap", who died in 1997.

Anne Moore was also part of Horticap from 1984.

At that time, Anne (second left in the photo below) was President of Harrogate Inner Wheel Club and through Rotarian Alan Ravenscroft, she heard all about this new charity that provided a sheltered workplace for adults with learning difficulties. The aims and objectives resonated with Anne as her only sibling Tom, who had struggled with mental health difficulties in adult life, had recently died.

Along with Anne's Inner Wheel friends, a large raffle was held at the Harrogate Spring Flower Show, then in the Valley Gardens. Later that same year they held another money raising event at the Yorkshire Agricultural Show and together, with the money from the earlier raffle, they were able to buy Horticap's first greenhouse. For the next 35 years the Inner Wheel Club always remembered Horticap in their fund-raising activities.

By end of 1984, Anne was on the board of Horticap along with John Wooton (former manager of Marks & Spencer) and John Green. Over the next 35 years she worked tirelessly to help and promote Horticap. She was instrumental in approaching Alan Titchmarsh to be Horticap's patron in 2003, for securing funding from Charitable trusts to improve the site and did countless talks and fund-raising events.



Horticap is proud to have many students who have attended over the years and some who joined us in the first 10 years, and who still attend.

...and here they all are!



Stephen has been with us since we opened



Timothy has also been with us since we opened



Stephen (Faz) started 35 years ago



Paula joined us 33 years ago



Karl has been at Horticap for 34 years



Michael (Lofty) has also attended Horticap for 34 years

The development of Horticap over the decades would not have been possible without the generosity of the people who have given their time and energy to us. Our Volunteers have a huge range of experience and skills to offer us, so we thought this would be a good opportunity to share some of the reasons why they chose Horticap to become involved with. We look forward to sharing more of their contributions throughout the year!

Margaret Bleasdale volunteered in the 1980s and 90s, after hearing a talk by the then Manager Geoff Freeston. As a flower arranger, Margaret was perfectly placed to help the students create beautiful floral arrangements with the dried flowers grown here.

"The flowers were all grown at Horticap and were hung up to dry on racks in the workrooms. It was a lovely sight to see all the different colours of the flowers and to smell their different scents. The arrangements were sold in the shop at Horticap."

I also used to help the students to make hanging baskets and in the run up to Christmas we made lots of Christmas wreaths."



Donation to Horticap charity

A charity for people with learning disabilities has raised £2,000 by being Harrogate Golf Club's Lady Captain's charity of the year.
 Margaret Bleasdale, the year's Lady Captain, said: "I volunteered at Horticap in the late 80s and early 90s by helping the students in the nursery, so it's a charity that has always been dear to my heart."
 Ian Bealby, of Harrogate, added: "We are very grateful to Margaret for such a generous donation and we'd like to thank everyone who made a donation during her year as Lady Captain."
 Pictured are Ian Bealby, Margaret Bleasdale and a group of Horticap students in the Horticap greenhouse.

As Lady Captain at Harrogate Golf Club, Margaret was able to continue her valuable fundraising for us.



"Horticap was the obvious choice to be my charity for the year and was very pleased to have raised some more money which I believe was used to help fit out the kitchen in the Hopkins. What a satisfying experience it was to be involved with Horticap, who knows I may be back one day to lend a hand."

Alisdair Stewart was Chair of Trustees from 1999 to 2008.

My volunteer journey began when Anne Moore invited me to join the Board. I was Chairman of the Harrogate Scanner Appeal and had also chaired Harrogate Round Table and Harrogate Brigantes Rotary Club. I knew Alan Ravenscroft through the RHS and Joy Allan joined at that time. Our General Manager, Ian and then Administration Manager, Pauline Shorter, worked from a leaking old container and needed help. Malcolm Hall, a Trustee of a major Charitable Trust, came to the rescue with encouragement and financial help. A local architect and a Harrogate builder produced new premises still used today. Alan Titchmarsh helped us to launch this new venture and became a loved friend of our students and continues to visit Bluecoat Wood Nurseries each year.

Students came with Social Service support usually on a sessional basis. A change of name was suggested but were persuaded to accept 'Horticap' as it stood for the mission statement "Horticultural Capability" which we encourage. Getting to know the students, instructors, and volunteers on a personal basis is always satisfying. The family atmosphere and community feel is our strength.

I was pleased to mark Horticap's 25th Anniversary with Phil Willis, MP, and marvel at the modern changes and expansion since then.



"I used to bring my Mum to Horticap, an ideal place for someone with mobility issues. She really enjoyed a cuppa and a cake in the beautiful patio garden, followed by a good look around the shop. Having worked most of my life with young children with special needs, I was always impressed by the busy, happy students we met.

It wasn't long before I signed up to volunteer in the café and shop. This was long before we became so smart. The hens that were free to wander about would sometimes sneak inside the shop and we did have a laugh trying to round them up and keep them outside!

We now have a beautiful building and I love working beside the students in Hopkins café. I know Mark misses his trips in my car to buy cakes from Bookers, but now he can help make ones that are much more delicious."



Jane has volunteered at Horticap since 2016.

Student Focus: Hannah

So we bring our first newsletter of 2024 to a close by returning well and truly into 2024, and introducing Hannah.

Hannah has attended Horticap since September 2013 and likes to be involved in many activities here. She is careful in her work and is a real asset at bedding plant time when 'carefully does it' really matters!

But it doesn't stop there as Hannah loves arts and crafts too, recently enjoying a special weaving session with Jenny.



Hannah lives at home and definitely has a busy week as she also attends Outside The Box in Ilkley. We recently had the pleasure of welcoming her photography group to Horticap for a look around.



Margaret (above) joined us at the beginning of 2020. "My brother David attended Horticap as a student for several years before he passed away in 2019. It was then I found I had more time on my hands and wanted to give something back, David loved Horticap and so do I!

I enjoy all aspects of my role as a volunteer, particularly supporting the students with anything from potting-on to creating festive wreaths".

Janet started volunteering in 2009.

"I worked for one of Horticap's trustees and when I retired he thought it would be a good idea for me to become a volunteer, so a year later that's what I did. 15 years on I'm still volunteering! I've enjoyed every minute and it's kept me out of mischief!!!!

Horticap is a special place with volunteers who have been volunteering for much longer than me, friendly staff and most of all lovely students who make me smile every time I'm at Horticap. I've enjoyed helping in different areas and at Flower Shows and look forward to being able to continue doing much of the same as long as I'm able".



Hannah is a good friend to all our students, and loves to chat to our customers and visitors to make them feel welcome. Her smile certainly brightens everyone's day!

Hannah can turn her hand to anything, but her favourite Horticap day involves cooking or crafting with Volunteer Pauline! But we all know that her very favourite day is spent going for long walks with her family and their lovely little dog Stanley!



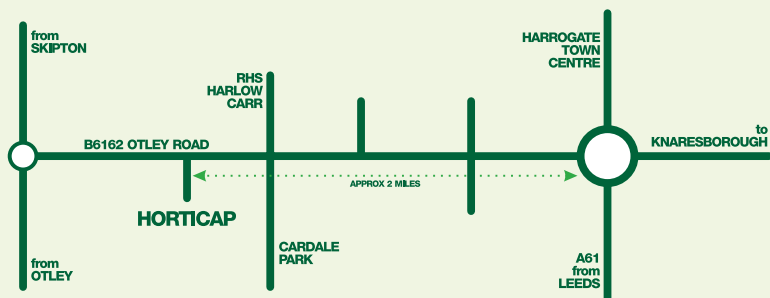
Dates for your diary

Harrogate Spring Flower Show
Thursday 25th to Sunday 28th
April 2024

Great Yorkshire Show
Tuesday 9th to Friday 12th July
2024

Fundraising Event!
Saturday 18th May 2024
BBQ at Horticap – keep an eye
out for details on our website
and social media.

We hope to see you there!



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