

horticap

Growing Together



Supporting and educating
at Bluecoat Wood Nurseries

www.horticap.org

Issue 2 2025

“Horticap is just the best”

We do like blowing our own trumpet at Horticap! After all, we are all proud of the work that goes on here, and its value to a great bunch of people, our students!

However, these are the words of our patron Alan Titchmarsh, who paid us a visit in April, and we simply cannot argue with him! Our work, both on and off site, continues with the seasonal plant and contract work, which has been incredibly busy due to the amazing weather we have enjoyed. The beautiful weather has also brought visitors in by the drove and our fabulous café, Hopkins, has never been busier. Our plant sales are increasing all the time, and it is testament to our students' work ethic that they thrive with the increased demand on them.



We were incredibly honoured to be awarded the Sustainable Business Award at the Stray Ferret Business Awards in March. This recognises Horticap as a business that has put sustainability at the top of its agenda. We are all very proud to have this achievement recognised, and to have been invited to the rather grand evening do!



The awards continued with a gold medal at the Harrogate Spring Show. We usually do well at the show, but there is always that thrill around Horticap when we get news of a medal, and we love it!

Of course, our success means more visitors which is great, but can be tricky for people parking. We cannot extend our land area, but we are making the most of what we have by changing the use of parts of it, by providing staff with a designated parking area behind the scenes. As always, our students have been working hard to prepare this space, and it is now complete. This will give our customers more space to park in the general car park, so good news all round!



Our Spring time included a wonderful trip to a local farm. Friend of Horticap, farmer Dave Harper, invited us to take a group of students to meet some lambs and horses. What a brilliant time they had! A huge thank you to Farmer Dave for his hospitality!



But of course, it's not all play here! We are also busy with creating our famous hanging baskets, keeping the sales greenhouse well stocked up, serving our wonderful customers and doing our very best to make each and every visitor feel welcome! We hope to see you all soon!

The Horticap Team



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What a talented bunch!

Always up for a new challenge, our students have impressed us yet again with creating a fabulously colourful mural, that has now been displayed in our sales greenhouse.



Instructor Jenny has been working with students, including Jamie, John, Alicia, Hannah, Karl and Alistair and Hannah in the West Wing, over a period of a few weeks.

The skills they have learned and developed over this time has ensured that the inspiration they took from our garden, could be translated into this beautiful piece that can be enjoyed by everyone.

They all hope our visitors love looking at it as much as they enjoyed making it!



...and there's more!

The West Wing has developed into a fantastic and encouraging creative space for our students. Most days there are activities going on that provide items for sale in the shop such as cards and scarves, music sessions and weaving to mention just a few!

Here is just a snap shot of the busy days our students spend in the West Wing, and we remain so grateful to the legacy from the estate of Julian West which has made it all possible!

We are sure that he would approve!



Recently, we have invested in some nifty technology to give even more variety for our students to engage with. To see their enthusiasm and ability shine through, and the resulting art work that quickly followed is a delight to see.





Sunshine, visitors to welcome, and pizzas all round!

The sun has been an unexpected and wonderful treat this spring, and has happily brought a lot of custom to Horticap. But the sun was not the only welcome visitor, as our Patron, Alan Titchmarsh, CBE, and his wife Alison stopped off to see us all, and to celebrate the unveiling of our new pizza oven. It was also an opportunity for them to see the extension to the dry stone walling and pizza oven housing, beautifully completed by Jason and Tracey of Living Stone Dry Stone Walling. They are a wonderful team who regularly support Horticap, and their work surrounding the outdoor café area is admired by all our visitors.

Alan and Alison were able to have a little time to appreciate our fabulous garden from the balcony before their official duties began. However, our students were able to enjoy pizzas, drinks and ice-creams in the garden before they even arrived.



The sun shone and a good time was had by all!

Our students are accomplished gardeners, and have worked hard to develop and nurture our own garden. The trees and hedges are flourishing, the planters are looking beautiful, the kitchen garden continues to be developed and the lawn is carefully cared for. It certainly seemed a comfortable place for Lewis to have a lie down! Alan was very impressed!



We were delighted that Jo Ropner, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of North Yorkshire, was also able to attend, and can be seen here, along with Alan and Alison, as they walked down to join in with the celebrations.



Alan always enjoys a wander around the gardens here at Horticap, and we are always proud to show him developments since his last visit.

As it was towards the end of the day, many of the students were heading home, but Alan and Alison found the time to chat with staff, trustees and volunteers, including our wonderful bee keepers, as he joined them for a relax in the shade.



“Being a supporter of Horticap is pure joy”



Such lovely words from Ellie, which we hope many people agree with. Ellie has become a good friend and supporter of Horticap, and is a frequent visitor. Her generosity has enabled us to continue our much needed conversion to electric gardening equipment much quicker than we expected. We will never forget Stuart's excitement when he saw the electric mower for the first time! Ellie has also kindly supported us to achieve our pizza oven ambition.

“The students are a delightful group of people, of all ages, that come together to make a formidable team. They make a huge contribution to the community with their dedicated work, under the guidance of committed staff and volunteers. Supporting this charity and enabling the students to continue with their work is an absolute pleasure.” Ellie.



We are always mindful of the generosity of everyone who supports us. We appreciate all donations, which go towards improving the facilities and experience for our students. They are definitely worth it!

We would particularly like to thank Southlands Care Home, Harrogate, and their parent company BUPA who have raised funds for us from their Spring Fair and coffee mornings throughout 2024. Also to the Washburn Heritage Centre who have donated their profits to us this year; Steve Scarre for walking the Nidderdale Charity Walk again, and absolutely not forgetting the various organisations that have held raffles and fundraising events for us. We thank each and every one for their ongoing support.



Student Focus - Carl

Carl has been at Horticap since September 2018, and our selection of just a very few photographs of Carl, show the immense variety of jobs that Carl accomplishes at Horticap!

From garden skills, to woodcraft, mentoring newer students and beyond, Carl is very much part of the gang, five days a week. He is particularly appreciated in the mess room as he likes to tidy the kitchen area and make sure all the pots go in the dishwasher. This ensures that everything is ready for the next break.



A particular strength required of any Horticap student is to demonstrate flexibility. Their days can be long and hard, as it is in any work environment, and they can be asked to join in with any activity their Instructor asks of them.

Carl demonstrates this ability in abundance as he is as comfortable with a wacker plate as he is managing tender young plug plants in the greenhouse. He occasionally likes a quiet work session in the West Wing, but he does seem happier when out and about and busy! It can be important for other students to work with Carl and for his best practice to be passed on. Keep up the great work Carl!





“We aim to help Students extend their knowledge and skills, through structured training using professionally qualified Staff and Volunteers”

Spring is such a busy time for the students at Horticap. The better weather brings new perennials, our bedding plants and an increased number of visitors for all our facilities. The greenhouses are full to bursting and there is a lot of positivity around the site. So how do our students ensure that everything runs smoothly, and plants are ready for our customers?

“We use Dutch trolleys to load up and transport our plants to the sales greenhouse, but only when they are ready to be sold! We then help to restock when necessary”



“We sow seeds and use plug plants for our bedding plants. We make sure the plants are carefully taken out of the trays, potted up and correctly labelled”



“We ensure that the plants are organised properly on the benches, in plant variety order and with all the labels facing the same way”



“It’s really important that our plants are correctly labelled, showing the plant variety and price. We also remember to water our young plants regularly”



“We use a lot of pots and trays and our stocks need topping up regularly, and the plant display shelving for outside the shop needed a lick of paint”



“We love helping our customers to choose and buy plants that are grown with love and care, and helping them by carrying their plants to their cars! Thank you everyone for your custom, and for supporting Horticap”

Horticap and Energy Sustainability

As a conscientious business, it has always been our policy to use energy wisely, both from an environmental angle, and because it is a major cost to our operations.

Over the years we have taken steps to reduce our energy use both in small ways such as replacing lights and equipment with those of greater efficiency, and also on larger scale mitigations, such as the installation of a 6 Kw wind turbine in 2010, which has generated 58,000 Kw to date. More recently, a 21 Kw solar panel installation, on the new building, in 2021 has already generated over 20,000 Kw!



All of our solar energy is used by the business, whereas some of the energy generated by our turbine during our closed hours is exported to the grid. In order to better utilise the energy generated by our wind turbine, we have recently started to invest in battery powered gardening equipment which can be recharged overnight using wind energy. We are currently raising money and looking for funding for our next big project which will be to replace our old worn out crew van with an electric or hybrid vehicle.

We are aiming high, so if you feel able to support us in this fundraiser, please see our website. Thank you.

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Planning for the future!

We are always on the lookout for new and innovative ways to make the future of Horticap more sustainable. It was with this in mind that several crews set off one Spring morning to Oakdale Golf Club, armed with spades and lots of enthusiasm. The plan was to plant a number of Spruce and Holly trees that would provide our students with plenty of foliage to enhance our wreaths with in the years to come!



Our thanks
go to
John Hews
and his
colleagues at
**Oakdale
Golf Club**



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In their own words!

Hannah and Stuart have continued their Horticap student diaries for us and are enjoying writing them. We follow them from the beginning of March to the end of May 2025, and start the diary entries with Stuart, who is one of the key students on our contract work, with Hannah proudly showing her own written diary. To read previous entries, please have a look at the newsletters that are on our website.

Stuart...

"I trained David to use the ride on mower. I was really proud of myself and I was proud of him for doing it!

I enjoyed going out on contracts, mowing lawns, strimming and raking up everything when we've cut hedges. It's hard work but I'm used to it and I like to do my work properly.

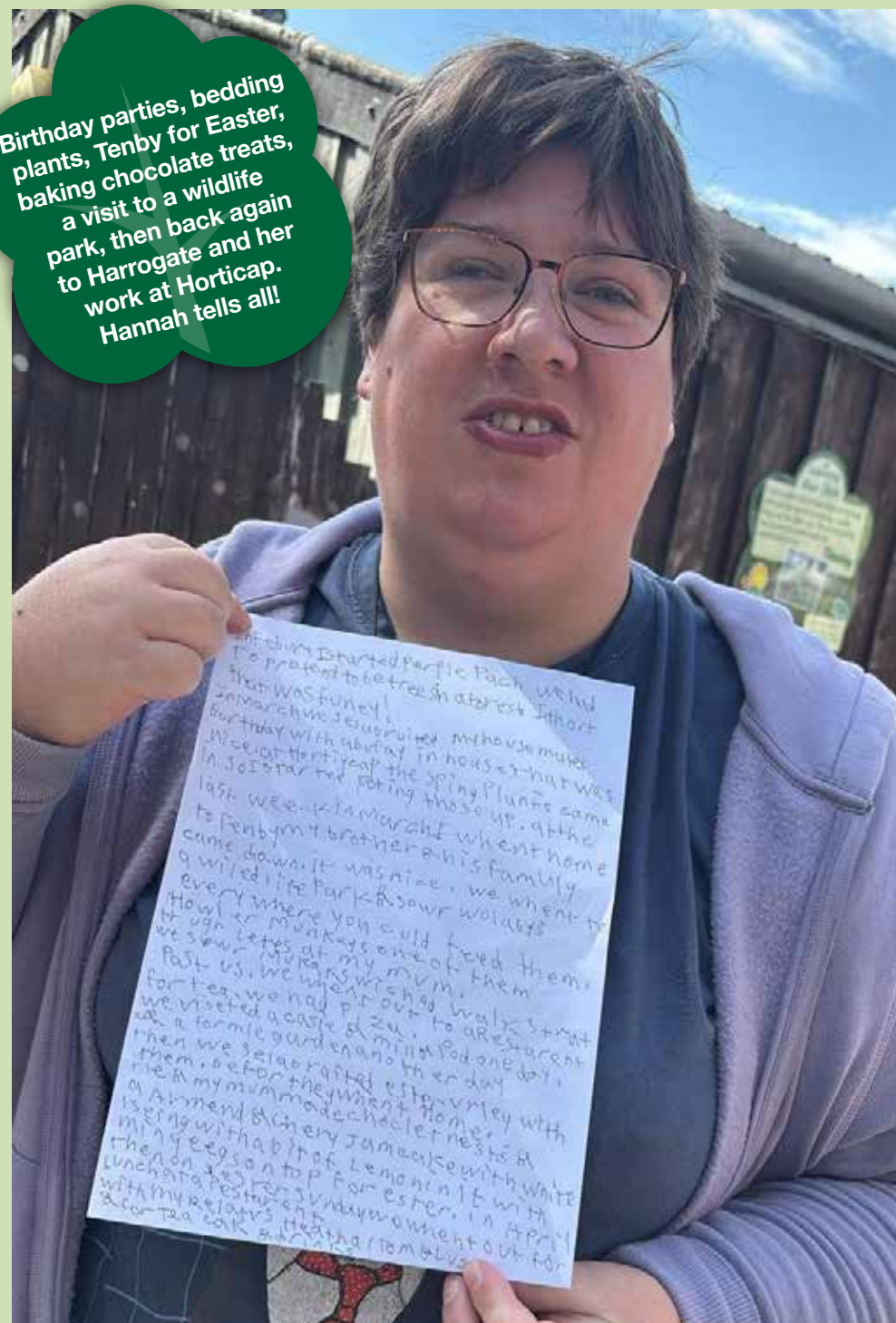
It was interesting when we took the mowers to be mended because I could see all the other equipment and vehicles.

I helped to take all the plants to the show ground for the Harrogate Spring Flower Show and I loved helping to build the show garden. I do it every year!

Sometimes we have a fire to burn rubbish and I have enjoyed helping out. One of my passions is shredding and it really bothers me when the shredder isn't working, like at the moment! I hope it's mended soon!"



Birthday parties, bedding plants, Tenby for Easter, baking chocolate treats, a visit to a wildlife park, then back again to Harrogate and her work at Horticap. Hannah tells all!



A touch of the Mediterranean... in Yorkshire!

What could be nicer than enjoying a touch of the exotic, and reliving holiday memories in your own garden? Olive Trees are usually associated with hot countries such as Italy and Greece, but they can tolerate our own climate too. Amazingly, they can live for more than 2,000 years!

Olives are a common culinary ingredient in many cuisines, with Olives and Olive Oil having many health benefits.

Callum and Alex have been caring for our Olive Trees that we have for sale here at Horticap, and think they would look great in any garden. They have some facts and advice for caring for them too!

- Olive Trees love sunshine, so make sure they have a sunny position in the garden.
- Young plants need watering regularly, but mature ones can withstand drought.
- Olives are evergreen, with small, oblong leaves and a silvery underside.
- They grow well in containers and like well-drained soil.
- Only prune to keep a good shape, when there is no chance of frost.



**Why not
add a few
Sunflowers to
your garden
too, for an
even more
dramatic and
sunny look?**

Student focus - Callum

Callum started coming to Horticap 10 years ago. In that time, he has involved himself in virtually everything he possibly can! When we worked on our art projects in the temporary art workshop, he was instrumental in setting the area up and decorating it. His caring personality made sure that accessibility for all was at the centre of consideration. His passion and ability when doing art is wonderful, and he was so happy to have his art work displayed as part of our Student Art Exhibition several years ago. Oh, and he is pretty impressive at jigsaws too!



Callum loves to be involved, and enjoys a good laugh too! His ready smile is a wonderful tonic, and his versatility and work ethic is welcomed by whichever Instructor he works with. He really comes into his own when we are doing the summer bedding, when he is the master of label organisation! But Callum really does like the variety offered to him, and long may that continue!

The 2025 show season starts with the Harrogate Spring Flower Show!

There was an interesting twist to the Horticap Show Garden at the Harrogate Spring Flower Show this year as we had been approached by Tesco PLC, who are in the process of opening a new store in Harrogate.



They were interested to know if we would like to develop a Horticap Garden in the grounds of their new site. Always seeking opportunities for Horticap, Phil, our Operations Manager, suggested that Tesco might sponsor this year's Show Garden, which would then be replicated on the Tesco site. They were keen to agree!

With a focus on bugs, bees and birds and named "The Quiet Space", our 2025 Show Garden was packed with pollinating and colourful plants, and featured a Yorkshire dry stone wall, created by Jason and Tracey of Living Stone Walling. The garden aimed to bring a haven for nature, and a tranquil space for all.



The show was well attended as always, and was a huge success with our garden being admired by everyone who visited it.

Our plant sales were plentiful, which made all the hard work of our students worthwhile!

It is a huge project to produce a Show Garden that appeals to visitors and judges alike, and that is a manageable task for our students. However, they all rise to the occasion and their passion always shines through. Needless to say, they (and everyone associated with Horticap) were thrilled with the Gold that was awarded!

As always, we are indebted to the mini army of volunteers who gave up their time to look after our stand, sell plants and promote our wonderful charity, always with a big smile!



Working Together!

Horticap is well known for its community collaborations, and we are very excited to share how our 2025 Show Garden fits in with the plans for the Harrogate Tesco site.

Our fabulous show garden will be relocated to their new site, to become a welcoming place for customers and wildlife alike. Alongside the feature drystone wall we will be introducing lots of other habitats for bugs and birds. Keep a look out for our brilliant bird boxes, they are sure to feature!



This garden will have a beautiful seating area and attractive planting. We are hoping to offer a different look to the planting areas that are usually found at supermarkets, and of course, it will definitely have that Horticap touch!

Tesco have also offered us a 5-year maintenance plan to keep the garden in tip top condition, and as we want to fund a new electric van to add to our new electrical tools and equipment for our gardening teams, this is a timely fundraiser. We want to bring pollinating and colourful plants to this project, so along with the funding from Tesco, we will create a haven for wildlife and a quiet seating area for customers.

Watch this space, it's going to be wonderful!

Talking of bird boxes...

We have some good news to share about one of our student made bird boxes. Anna, who works in the shop, bought one and within days of putting it up, noticed a pair of Blue Tits checking it out. Anna filled a wire bird feeder with fur brushed from her dog, Bo, and they have used this to line the nest they subsequently built. Anna has kindly offered photos of the industrious pair that have taken up residence in the 'house that Jack built'! We are looking forward to hearing news of lots of baby Blue Tits fledging!



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