

# horticap

*Growing Together*



SCAN ME

Supporting and educating  
at Bluecoat Wood Nurseries

[www.horticap.org](http://www.horticap.org)

*Issue 3 2025*

**Hello, and welcome** to our third newsletter of 2025, and what better image to start it with than the words on these cobbles. Fun, laughter and friendship could be the motto for Horticap alongside 'Growing Together', and is what we see in our students every day. Whether in the mess room, greenhouses, gardens or off-site, our students' good humour goes too! But the best people to illustrate this are the students themselves.



**Back to the cobbles though!** The eagle eyed amongst our followers might recognise them from our garden at The Great Yorkshire Show, and we have pleasure in highlighting our presence at this, and other local shows further on in this edition.

**Work this summer** has had its challenges with the prolonged hot weather and drying wind. The plants needed more watering than usual, and we were pleased that our own stored water supply managed well. In our sustainability section this time, we offer some guidance on using peat free compost, which we hope is found useful.

**We love sharing** good news, and there has been lots of it this year. Perhaps the most significant is a rather special purchase...but more of that later on!

**What we also love** is the wonderful support we get from everyone who knows us, it is gratefully appreciated and never taken for granted!

**We look forward** to continuing to welcome you to this happy, productive charity, full of happy, productive people! See you soon.

*The Horticap Team*

## Hello

My name's Kirsty, and I joined Horticap about 6 weeks ago as Fundraiser. I have known about the charity since we moved to Harrogate 18 years ago and visited regularly when the children were small, and we always get our Christmas Tree from Horticap. I'm getting to know the wonderful students, staff and volunteers, and look forward to fundraising for a number of brilliant projects like the student boot room and the new greenhouse. Although it's not the sweetest smelling of projects, we even need funding for a new cesspit!

Since arriving in Harrogate, I have worked for a number of local charities including Saint Michael's Hospice, Age UK, Fountains Abbey and as Chair of the PTA for Harrogate Grammar School. My expertise lies in securing grants and donations from trusts and foundations, but happy to turn my hand to events and community fundraising too. If anyone has any ideas, useful contacts or suggestions, please do email me on [bluecoatwood@horticap.org](mailto:bluecoatwood@horticap.org)

Horticap is not just about growing plants - it's where together we grow confidence, independence, friendship and joy, and I feel very privileged to be part of the Horticap family.

*Kirsty*



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## A Grand 'New Van' Day Out!

9:00am on 21st July 2025 – it's 'Van Day' and we were ready to go to Chesterfield to pick up our brand new all electric van. Along with pack-ups, as requested by our student Simon, and a celebratory cake from Julie in the office, we travelled in the old van to bring back the new one. We were all very excited as we had been checking out the prices of new vans for a while, and finally we found what we wanted that was within our price bracket. To say that the students were excited was an understatement!

**Naturally** the students wanted to check the vehicle over, so Simon measured up the back to make sure that the mowers would fit in, Jamie checked the electronics and satnav, Stuart looked for a big engine but could only find a small electric motor, and Liam...Liam looked at motorbikes with Dan!

**Dion, the Sales Executive** at the dealership had been pre-warned that there would be some hard bargaining by the students (which was actually already done, but it was important that our students have real ownership of this van), and after they had 'struck the deal', they all shook hands. The students were delighted; we had bought Horticap's very first full electric van!



**When all was sorted**, it was time to come back... Funnily enough, when we set off to Chesterfield, the old van was full of students but when we came back, it was the new one in favour, with only one student choosing to ride in the old one – Simon, who fell asleep for the entire journey home through his excitement! Our new van had found a new home, but we needed to make it ours!



**We called round** to One Nine Signs in Harrogate, and got a great deal to put our logo on the van, along with logos of the other local businesses who had made significant donations. We also put the picture of our patron, **Alan Titchmarsh** on the van which he said made him "**very honoured**" indeed. Keep a look out for us around Harrogate, we are hard to miss!

**Being in a position** to buy this vehicle has been a long time in the making. As a charity, building lasting relationships, applying for grants and careful financial management, along with a lot of patience and mutual trust, is crucial to making these kind of purchases possible. Buying this new van was made possible because of the generosity of some lovely Horticap supporters, primarily Banks Housing, and the golf day that Simon Cotton, in association with Your Harrogate Radio, organised and hosted. **We cannot thank them enough!**

## A Grand Unveiling! By Jamie Pickles

"On Friday 8th August, the unveiling of the new electric van took place at Horticap, with the livery. On the back of the doors it has all the sponsors who helped raise the money.

**Horticap** also invited some guests including the Harrogate Mayor, Chris Aldred, and the local Harrogate MP, Tom Gordon. I also got interviewed by Your Harrogate Radio and I said it was the best van in Harrogate!

**All the students**, volunteers and the trustees had a good time! Hopkins served some bacon and sausage sandwiches. It was a good day enjoyed by all."





# Making a garden statement!

## – *Cercis canadensis*

Our featured plant for this edition is the *Cercis canadensis*, a wonderful, statuesque plant that has become a very popular addition in our sales greenhouse. Native to North America and commonly known as the eastern redbud, this deciduous tree is known for having bronze and yellow heart shaped leaves and clusters of pink flowers, which flatten to deep purple seed pods in the autumn. Its smooth bark becomes scaly with age, with slender twigs which may appear almost black. **They are stunning!**

In addition to being an ornamental tree, the rich nectar from the blossom offers food to bees and butterflies, with some birds feasting on the seed pods in the late summer and autumn. A mature *Cercis canadensis* has a dense canopy which provides important shelter for small animals, illustrating its environmental importance. It is recognised as having a significant role in improving and maintaining the health and function of ecosystems.



**Scott and Jamie have been helping to care for these wonderful plants!**



## From our own Volunteers



It was so good to see volunteer Will i Am back at Horticap following a period of ill health. He is back to bouncing around the site again and helping in his own inimitable way! Welcome back William, and wear your t-shirt with pride!

Nicky and Janet represented Horticap at a Garden Party to celebrate volunteers and public servants across N. Yorks and Cleveland. It was hosted by His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of North Yorkshire, Jo Ropner and the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell. Held at The Deanery, Nicky and Janet said it was a lovely occasion.

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A postcard from South Wales



**Hannah leaves us** for a few weeks every summer to spend some much needed time with her family in South Wales. We always love hearing of her plans before she goes, and of everything that she has done when she returns, particularly the antics of the gulls!

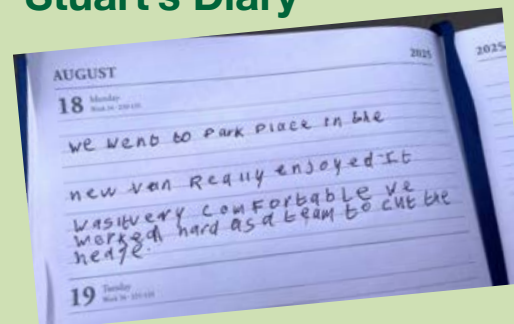
Her diary summary from June shows how busy she was before going. She mentions making a new summer hanging basket that always takes pride of place at the entrance to her cousin's pub near York.

Hannah made a pretty silk scarf to take as a present for her Mum, along with lots of potting up bedding plants in the greenhouse.

Hannah continues to attend Purple Patch Arts, enjoying the dance, drama music and visual arts sessions. We think her holiday photos speak for themselves! Thank you for continuing your diary while you are on holiday Hannah.



## Stuart's Diary



**Stuart helped** create the show garden for the GYS. It meant loading and unloading trays and trays of plants and making sure they were all placed correctly. He always enjoys doing this.



**Stuart was one of the students** that joined Phil and Dan on the new van buying adventure. He was also delighted to visit retired student, David, and seeing him look so well!

**Stuart** has had a busy three months since the last newsletter. He is an invaluable member of the contract team that he is usually in, as he is familiar with all the premises and the work involved. Stuart can be seen here working with Simon and Liam to neaten up a really long hedge, and then clear up all the cuttings!



**Preparing all the equipment** needed for the day, when doing contract work, is such an important part of the morning. Stuart is a key part of this and ensures that everything gets in the van/trailer or pick up. He always makes sure that there is no need to return to base!



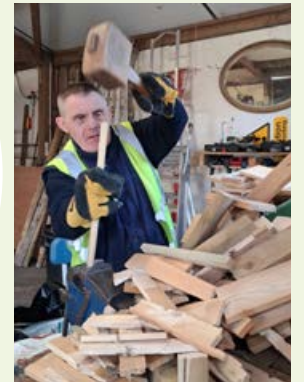


**“We aim to help Students extend their knowledge and skills, through structured training using professionally qualified Staff and Volunteers”**

We feel sure that visitors to Horticap appreciate that the work here is varied, and to illustrate just how diverse the work can be on any one day, our students present **A Day In The Life Of Horticap** in pictures!

**These photos** are just a snapshot of the kind of day that our students experience. Different days, new deliveries and changing weather all bring new challenges which they all meet with the usual enthusiasm.

**Staff are adept** at ensuring that our students' individuality and needs are both respected and nurtured. Our aim is to allow for a productive, purposeful and creative working environment that complies with all working regulations. The atmosphere here is happy and relaxed, with staff required to maintain a high standard of leadership and care. **It is a skillful talent to have!**





## Doing our bit for sustainability!



The value to the environment of using peat free compost is well documented, and Horticap now only sells this planting medium. Peatlands are the UK's largest stores of carbon, and the more it is harvested for compost, the more carbon is released into the atmosphere. Reducing this carbon release is beneficial to us all, as is protecting these precious peatlands which support the habitats of many rarer wildlife species, as well as its maintaining an ability to prevent flooding. However, peat free compost

performs a little differently to the compost we are all used to using.

**We are aware** that some customers have found the transition to using peat free compost a little challenging, so our students have some handy hints to give you the best chance of gardening success.

- **Water little and often** as peat free compost can be quite free draining. Pots can also look dry, but have enough moisture for the plant so pop your finger down the side of the pot to check.
- **Add a liquid feed** to pots after a few weeks, as the fertilizer in new compost runs out after a short time, particularly if plants are watered often.
- **Only buy** as you need due to the quality of compost deteriorating over time.
- **Buy the best** peat free compost that can be afforded for the very best results. We have confidence that if the compost we sell is used by our Patron, Alan Titchmarsh, then our gardening customers will also find it a good product to use!

**Horticap is proud** of its sustainable achievements, and we do our very best to use our collected garden waste from our contract work, and our own site as ethically as possible. Wherever possible, we chip wood which we use for mulch on our garden borders, and you will also see it on our pathways in the Nature Trail. We also have our own large composting bays, where much of our garden waste goes, and put it to good use when it has matured.

**We are gradually** increasing our use of peat free compost on the nursery itself, particularly with our bedding plants. We will be expanding this use on our nursery as the quality of peat free compost for commercial use improves.



## Exploring compost!

Naturally, our students are very familiar with compost as they spend much of their working time at Horticap potting and repotting plants and moving compost bags around the site to where they are needed. They also have a familiarity with the different types we use, depending on the nature of the plant, along with the right conditions needed for successful composting. The right environment attracts all the bugs and creepy crawlies necessary to process the foliage into usable compost, and it was with all this in mind that Jayne's team embarked on a fun crafting session. Using colourful modelling clay to make the things they see in soil and compost, along with the resulting beautiful and well-nourished flowers, they really enjoyed themselves creating their own compost creatures!



So enthusiastic was this group's approach to the activity, they extended it to make information posters, which have been stuck in the garden over by the West Wing, to be admired by everyone!







## Tree Spirit

**We absolutely love this book**, 'Tree Spirit' by David Griffiths, which is beautifully illustrated by his daughter Nicola Turner.

**Our students** had the privilege of seeing the first display of the original artwork when David and Nicola came in to see us. Everyone was spellbound by the story and the artwork, and are very happy that the book is now published, and for sale in our shop. It is proving very popular too!

**David** is a great friend to Horticap, and is always on hand to help with show garden advice. Who can forget the backdrop he designed for us for our 40th Anniversary Show Garden last year?



**Will, Emily and Eliza** from Manchester, were thrilled to have been given a copy of 'Tree Spirit' by their Great Grandma, to read in the summer holidays and we are delighted that they have sent us their reviews!

**Will, 11**, wrote *"The Tree Spirit is a wonderful read: a heartwarming adventure and full of fun! I especially enjoyed the hilarious song of the rabbits"*.

**Emily who is 8**, wrote that *"the pictures have so much detail, it made me want to try and draw them myself"*.

**Eliza is 4**, said *"I liked all the cute animals"*.

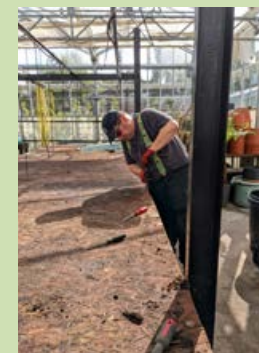
**Thank you all for sending us your reviews!**



## Greetings from the Greenhouses

**There is** some rather inventive redesigning of part of the sales greenhouse going on. The area had a tendency to become quite congested, which does not make for a good, or safe working environment for anybody, so the students have been busy dismantling the benches with Jim, and working out a better configuration. It has been quite a job, but it will be worth it!

**Our greenhouses** are starting to fill up with the autumn/winter bedding, and perennials that we nurture through the winter. Although on a smaller scale, the processes are the same as in the summer. Our students are accustomed to fitting straight back in to this work, and love that their hard work with the plants gives pleasure to our customers, and much needed income for Horticap from the plant sales. Students who are new to Horticap benefit from the guidance from staff, and watching our more experienced students.



**What is Hannah standing on, and what is Ross modelling? Mmmmm?!**



## Forward planning into 2026!

**Potting up plants** is not the only activity going on in the top greenhouse. The planning for the 2026 show garden is already underway, and under wraps! But, how about a little taster to get everyone thinking about what the theme may be?

One thing is for sure, it will unmistakably be a Horticap Show Garden! We shall be sharing some little 'teasers' in the next few newsletters, so keep your eyes peeled and your imagination open!



## Simon's Shift in the Shop!



**Simon absolutely loves** working in the shop, and knows exactly what is required of him as a member of the team. Following him as he works through his tasks, it is clear that, not only has he been well trained, but that he cares a lot about the responsibilities he has been given to do!

**On this particular shift,** he was keen to check out the 'donated cards' box to see if some new ones had arrived. We receive some really attractive used greetings cards that the students upcycle to sell in the shop.



**Simon is always happy** to check off deliveries to the shop although he was a little surprised to see some Christmas items in this delivery, as it is still the summer. He is looking forward to decorating the shop when it is the right time!



**An important part** of working in the shop is to ensure that the bins are emptied regularly, and Simon is great at doing this. He ensures that the shop bins have new bin liners, as well as making sure that all the rubbish goes in the right industrial bins.



## Hopkins@Horticap

**Our customers** are seeing an increased presence of Horticap students working in Hopkins@Horticap, and it is evident that they are thoroughly enjoying the experience. For many, Horticap work has been almost exclusively horticultural, and trying out new things can be more challenging for some than others. What is important at Horticap, is that each student is given the opportunity to try something new, encouragement to achieve, and respected if they decide not to continue.

**As part of their work experience** in Hopkins, our students work to the same high standards as would be expected of anyone working in a café that is proud to have been awarded a 5-star hygiene rating.

**When visiting Hopkins** for a drink and something to eat, we hope you enjoy seeing the progress that our students are making, and the skills they are becoming more confident with, with support from the Hopkins team.



**These 'step by step'** photos show Matthew being supported to make his first Americano, set up a tray, serve customers at the table and then clearing the table.

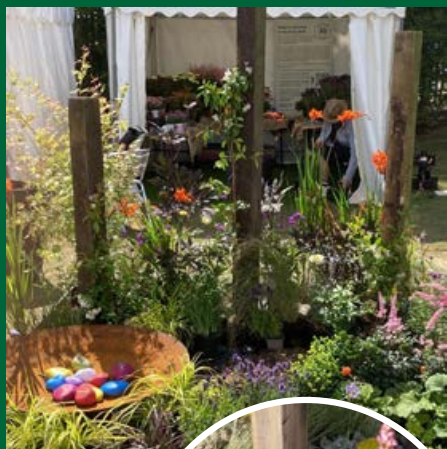
**Matthew arrived** in Hopkins with a fair amount of hospitality experience, and what has been impressive about Matthew's success is his ability to adapt to working with different staff members and different equipment in a different environment and of course, different customers. He is proud to announce that he has since moved on to making a Mocha!



## The Great Yorkshire Show

Having a presence at local shows is an important part of the Horticap diary. As a charity, it is an excellent way to promote ourselves and our work. We love being able to share our enthusiasm and passion for the work that we do with adults with additional needs, and of course, their achievements!

This summer we were delighted to be presented with a Silver Award at the Great Yorkshire Show, and all credit goes to the team that designed and built this pretty garden!



## Weeton Show

We were pleased to be back at Weeton Show, and grateful to Alistair who spent a lovely morning spreading the word and selling lots of our healthy plants, before the rain appeared!



## Harrogate MG & Classic Car Show at Pateley Bridge

This show has become a firm favourite for a small group of students, who accompany Steve to run a plant stall and to inspect all the beautiful classic cars that are exhibited there.

It was an early start for them as they all met at Horticap to load up the plants into the van. Jamie enjoyed meeting the visitors and looking around the cars, Alistair was happiest admiring the cars too. Mark was wonderfully efficient, and Victoria was able to enter a dog into the Waggiest Tail Competition, and came 2nd!



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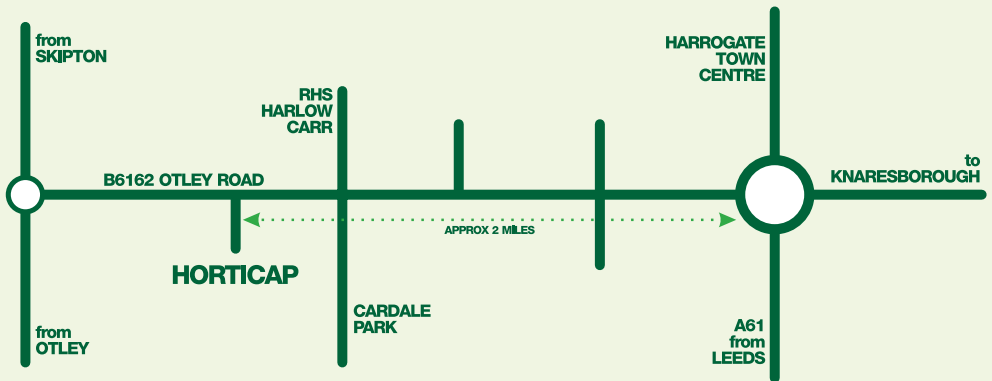
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Please do keep visiting Horticap to see the fabulous work that goes on here. We always have an Art Exhibition on, and our Gardens and Nature Trail are really wonderful, and free to visit! Our shop and café, Hopkins@Horticap are open all week too.

Keep a look out on our social media to find out about future events.



**Horticap Ltd**  
Bluecoat Wood Nurseries  
Otley Road Harrogate HG3 1QL  
Tel: 01423 522876  
[info@horticap.org](mailto:info@horticap.org)

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