

# horticap

*Growing Together*



SCAN ME

Supporting and educating  
at Bluecoat Wood Nurseries

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

*Issue 4 2025*



**Welcome to the final newsletter of 2025.** It has been a great year here at Horticap, and the time has flown by! There have been changes, some welcome and some not, but our work has continued apace for the benefit of our students.

**Our shop and café** have seen increased numbers and our plant sales have been amazing. We are lucky to have such an experienced and knowledgeable team to care for all the quality plants, which remains our core business. From the tiniest bedding plant to the most mature tree or shrub, you can count on your purchase being in exceptional condition. We have just taken delivery of our stock of young plants which our students expertly pot on and nurture over the winter months, so that they are in top condition for when they go on sale next year. It is a labour of love at Horticap!

**A wander around** our greenhouse illustrates the hard work of our students, the colours are uplifting and the ever growing textile garden on the wall, made by one of the craft teams, is a wonderful work of art and the perfect backdrop.



**We are delighted** to present just a small selection of our Christmas delights that Carol and Chris have to offer in our shop and café. It has been the busiest time for our students, unpacking these items and pricing them all up ready to be displayed. The whole building is warm and inviting and looking very festive. We love it!

**Of course,** our routine work continues with the site being kept tidy, ongoing work refreshing the paint on the greenhouse benches and our gardening work that results in lots of garden waste that we chip and compost.



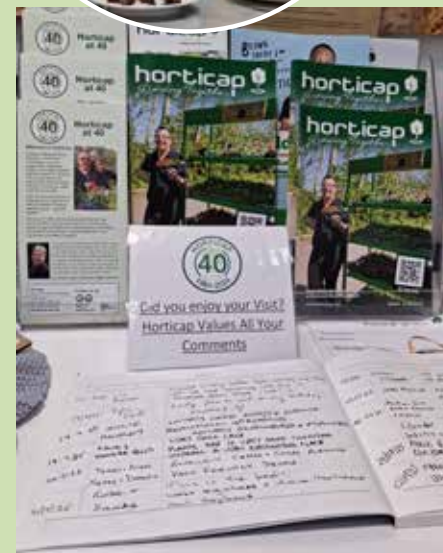
**The Hopkins team** are readying themselves for a busy build up to Christmas. Not only do they make sure that our customers get to choose from a new tasty Christmas menu from 1st December, they also ensure that all our students, staff and volunteers have a proper Christmas dinner at our party on Tuesday 23rd December. Our party day is a fabulous occasion when the Hopkins team skill comes to the fore. We can't wait!

**The popularity** of the Horticap shop and Hopkins café is regularly recognised from seeing the complimentary comments in our visitors' book. We love reading what is written, so please do look out for it opposite the shop counter and add to it. It helps us to help you!

**As 2025 draws to its close,** we would like to thank each and every one of you who continue to support Horticap.

**Wishing all our customers a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!**

*The Horticap Team*



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## It's The Most Wonderful Time of the Year!

**Christmas at Horticap** just would not be the same without the buzz of our student-made Christmas wreaths being created, and our top quality trees arriving. Work on the wreaths starts in the late summer, and continues right up to the day we close for Christmas. It's hard work but exciting too!



**Danny and Callum** mastered the wreath making machine this year. It takes a lot of coordination and concentration so we were really pleased for them both.

**We make sure** that all the hayed up frames are trimmed to keep them neat. We sell hundreds so it is important to keep an eye on how many we have made. Greenery and decorations are added for that unique Horticap touch.



## Christmas is coming!



**How quickly time passes**, in a blink of an eye the summer has drifted away and we are back in the winter months and the Christmas Season! It's been a super busy year for us in the shop. The students have been working extremely hard, continuing to learn new skills and improving their work ethic with the tasks they do on a day to day basis. The enjoyment and well-being they gain from interacting with our visitors is evident.

**We have much to offer** in the shop for the season, from small token Christmas presents to our ever popular selection of Black Yak hats and gloves and this year, felt slippers which make an ethical and sustainable Christmas present. We also have a wide range of fabulous spring bulbs on our nursery, with some great Amaryllis bulb gift packs being a lovely alternative gift.



**Lots of crocheted** 'Made for Horticap' items are being created by our volunteers, alongside kindly donated items and of course, our student made recycled Christmas cards. Things do sell out fast, so do not hesitate to pay us a visit and see what we have to offer.

**We have a range** of affordable local artist paintings and photography for sale, alongside an exhibition by local artist Janet Gomersall upstairs in our café.

**The enchanting book** 'Tree Spirit' by Nicola Turner and David Griffiths is also for sale, highlighting the magic of nature and the environment, an ideal Christmas present for children.



**From all the shop staff and students, we wish you all a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year and look forward to welcoming you back in 2026. Carol Sowden, Shop Supervisor.**



# Happy Christmas from Hopkins!



**Hopkins has had a great 2025**, and has become a 'go to' place for food and drinks in the area. Being fully accessible is a must for many of our customers, with the quality of both the food and service guaranteed.

**We have had more students** requesting to join the Hopkins team which just makes the work even better!

**Hopkins has some great** culinary products for sale, alongside wonderful preserves and baked goods that make the perfect stocking filler or gift. We aim to only sell items sourced locally, so you can be sure your purchase supports local, independent companies!

**This Christmas**, we have been thrilled that our Hopkins@Horticap made Christmas cakes have been so popular with customers. The demand has been incredible and we thank everyone for their support in buying them.

**Chris and the Hopkins team look forward to welcoming all our customers for the Christmas season, and into the New Year.**



# And it doesn't stop there!

**Our Christmas trees** are legendary, with many seen sparkling away in windows across the local area. They are available in lots of sizes, in pots and to put in stands and our students, staff and volunteers are on hand to help advise and carry your tree to your vehicle.

**All our Christmas trees** are Nordman Fir, always top quality and a lovely shape too. We also offer a delivery service in the Harrogate area for only £10.00. Just ask at the shop, or give us a call!



**Our student-made wreaths** are all 12" and are priced at £30 each. There will be plenty to choose from in the sales glasshouse, and they are all individually unique!

**Our Christmas party** will be on Tuesday 23rd December, meaning that Horticap will be closed all day, but before that, we have several choirs coming in to entertain us. We

welcome the Altogether Now Choir again for their third time, and if the last two visits are anything to go by, we are in for a real treat! They will be here on Monday 8th December in the afternoon, and we are grateful to our friend Jeannie, who has organised this for us.

**We are hosting** a late night shopping and Hopkins event on Thursday 11th December from 6 – 8pm, when the U3A choir will be singing a lovely selection of Christmas music to get us all in the Christmas spirit!

**Both of these choirs** will perform to anyone visiting, so please show your support for them.



**There will be plenty to buy**, but if you just cannot decide on which special gift to buy, why not consider one of our Horticap Gift Vouchers as shown by Victoria and Hannah?

We sell them all year round, but do have specially designed ones for Christmas. They are exclusive to us, can be bought for any amount, and are valid in the shop and Hopkins for one year from the purchase date!



## Horticap Happiness!

We are so pleased for **Alicia**, who many will recognise from her time working in both the shop and Hopkins. Following a recent visit from a team from the Newcastle Building Society to give financial advice to our students, Alicia applied to do some work experience with them. She was accepted and is thrilled to be starting at the Knaresborough branch just as soon as the paperwork is completed! Congratulations Alicia, we hope you are as proud of yourself, as we are of you!



We love to share news of activities that our students do when they are away from Horticap. Andrew is passionate about attending his gym regularly, and recently won a Body Building Trophy. We are always impressed with Andrew's dedication to his chosen sport, and very pleased that he is keen to share his success with us all.



**Callum** was so happy to be given a model Eddie Stobart truck from fellow student David, who is a talented model maker. It was a complete surprise for Callum to be given such a thoughtful gift, and the smile on his face shows how pleased he was as Eddie Stobart are Cullum's favourite trucks.

The Horticap family is all about friendship and caring about each other. We see this in action every day in our students, and it is very touching to see.



## Horticap's Shed of Yesteryears

Have you noticed the addition of two exhibitions by the side of the sales greenhouse? Celebrating 40 years of Horticap in 2024 brought back lots of happy memories for our longer standing students of how work practices have changed, and the kinds of tools that they commonly used back in the early days. Some equipment has not changed much, but some have and it is testament to our students that they have adjusted their working styles to accommodate these changes, both in the workshop and for their horticultural activities.

These displays have been made possible as we are often gifted old tools and utensils that have lived a life and are largely redundant in the modern age. Some, of course, are repurposed by volunteer William and sold for the benefit of the charity, but we thought that visitors, and our students, would enjoy being reminded of the items they would commonly see and use in their everyday lives, or serve as a glimpse into the past for younger generations. So we present our Workshop and Kitchen displays as a glimpse into the past.

The Workshop reflects a time before power and automated equipment, and the skilled trades that crafted these fine tools and used them in daily life. Tools include antique saws, braces and planes, used in the production of handmade furniture, right through to the impressive scythe and agricultural fork that would have been used in fields to harvest crops.

The Kitchen celebrates an example of domestic life in a mid-20th century kitchen, and the tools for cooking, baking and preservation that would have been in daily use to prepare home cooked meals, in times before the convenience of ready meals and fast-food deliveries.

We hope these displays leave visitors with a renewed appreciation of the skills and effort that went into everyday life in the not-so-distant past, and a respect for our parents and grandparents who made and used the items on display.





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



The range of skills being demonstrated in The West Wing is wonderful to see. There is such a variety of things going on, and some fantastic creations being made and displayed all over the Horticap site, as well as being sold through the shop. Our students are incredibly proud of their achievements, and quite rightly too!



Jamie and Hannah have both been working with volunteer Pauline, herself a retired art teacher, to do these impressive sketches.



From art work, needlecraft, music and beyond, The West Wing is continuing to prove a really rather special place for our students to work and learn.



We love that our students remain so engaged in their creative work. The Thursday group with Jenny has been continuing to ‘grow’ their textile garden in the sales greenhouse, so make sure you have a look. Fridays group with Jayne is making some Christmas items for sale in the shop, and Beth is continuing her music and art sessions.





## Stuart and Hannah's Diaries

**The intention** of presenting these diary summaries has been to offer a glimpse of the range of tasks that our students accomplish on a daily basis. Also, as Hannah has chosen to, to celebrate activities they do out of work. Hannah and Stuart have taken this task very seriously, and have ensured that they complete their diaries on a daily basis. We hope that these summaries have been enjoyable and interesting to read, and that Hannah and Stuart keep them as a reminder of their achievements at Horticap throughout 2025.



**"I have enjoyed** going down to Tesco's and seeing how it's all been set out. I'm looking forward to possibly planting up at Tesco's. I didn't enjoy getting wet in the rain while doing the shredding.

**I would really like** to have a happy year next year. It's been a difficult year for me, but coming to Horticap and seeing my friends has helped".

*Stuart*



**Stuart enjoyed** a visit to Elvington Air Museum to deliver some shelving. The whole team also had a great time exploring the site and inspecting all the fabulous aircraft.



## Magic Potions for Magic Moments

**It doesn't seem long** since Hannah joined us after her summer in Wales, but in that time she has been busy creating lots of wonderful art work, and potting on the bedding plants. Her art has returned to painting, which she is so proficient at. We all remember the beautiful picture of Sunflowers that she painted for our Patron Alan on one of his visits. Hannah continues to work in the shop on Wednesday afternoons and excels at both her customer skills and work ethic. Once again, Hannah is proud to write her own summary of her diary from the last few weeks.



**In her own time,** Hannah continues to attend Purple Patch Arts and is proud of her achievements at swimming, but her very favourite thing this year has been her recent holiday in Scarborough with a day spent in York immersing herself in the whole Harry Potter Experience! Hannah is an avid Harry Potter fan and really enjoyed all the activities on offer, particularly making magic potions and drinking Butter Beer!



## Introducing our Horticap Ambassadors

We feel extremely privileged to have so many loyal and generous friends that continue to support Horticap, and to have amazing volunteers that come each week to work alongside our students. Many of our volunteers are retired and have regular time to give, however we have some lovely supporters that are all in full time work and don't have the space for weekly commitments. Around 10 years ago we thought about making some of these supporters Horticap "Ambassadors" in appreciation of their passion for Horticap, but also because they have the ability to open doors and introduce us to other influential business people. Therefore, it is with great pleasure that we introduce David, Tim and Simon, who were honoured at our recent unveiling event for our fabulous new van!

**David Hayes** was asked to become our first Ambassador. Seen next to Phil, David was our very well respected Deputy Chairman for 8 years, and still continues to regularly support and fundraise for Horticap!

**Tim Crowther** became our second Ambassador. Pictured to the left of David, Tim presented the BBC Radio Leeds Sunday Gardening programme for many years alongside Joe Maiden, with Phil regularly invited to join the show. Tim encouraged us to promote our charity throughout his time there, which increased our customer base.

This year we thought it was the right time to add someone else to the list.



**Simon Cotton** was approached to become our most recent Ambassador. Simon, shown receiving his certificate and badge from Peter and Phil, is the Managing Director of the HRH Group, which includes The Fat Badger and The Yorkshire Hotel in Harrogate. He has been a supporter for some years now, raising thousands for Horticap.

**David, Tim and Simon** are truly great friends to Horticap, using their energy and enthusiasm to support and raise much needed funds for Horticap. Thank you all so much!



## Yorkshire in Bloom



Every year the judges from Yorkshire in Bloom come to judge our gardens. Our previous garden regularly got a silver gilt, which was great, but since the continued development of our new garden, the scope to do things differently, and a little more creatively, has been fantastic.

Our garden has taken time to grow and develop, but this year we were delighted to receive 'Joint Best in Category for a Charitable Organisation' award, alongside St Gemma's Hospice of Leeds. We were over the moon as it recognised all the hard work of the staff and students. The judges liked the choice of plants and planting, the Nature Trail, with the Hobbit House and Kitchen Garden proving a big hit. They liked the way we grow and provide the kitchen with fresh organic plants (our soups often have Horticap grown produce in and are a big hit with customers and staff alike). We were also entered into the fun category of "Last of the Summer Wellies" and you guessed it...we won for our giant green wellies and the little wellies planted up around the garden. Well done everyone!



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# Sustainability for the Future

This year, each newsletter has visited the various ways that Horticap helps the environment by improving its sustainability. We have featured recycling, the transition to renewables and water capture, but we know there is much more that we can do here and we are never complacent about our responsibilities. This edition champions our ethos and strengths.

- **We have a holistic approach** with sustainability being integrated not only in plant production but in education, social engagement, biodiversity and infrastructure improvements.
- **Our biodiversity and habitat** support includes the pond, wildlife areas, wooded sections and bug hotels showing an attention to nature, beyond just growing plants.
- **Social sustainability** is central to our mission by supporting adults with disabilities with training, developing skills and community involvement, all which contributes to sustainable social benefit.
- **Practical improvements** include upgrading polytunnels, addressing drainage, replacing old facilities and improving our nature trails, which are real and tangible steps.
- **Using peat-free compost** helps to reduce the environmental degradation associated with peat extraction. Recycling and reusing pots enables us to reduce waste and lessens the demand for new plastic.
- **Our educational outreach** programme by engaging with schools and the community, teaches children about sustainable practices and nature, which helps spread sustainability values.



# Looking forward...

We have a dazzling array of Spring bulbs available to buy in our sales greenhouse this year, and it would seem that by the way sales have been going, Harrogate is going to look amazing in early 2026 when they all flower! Our own garden should look pretty wonderful too, as our students have been out and about planting bulbs in our garden.



The bottom corner of our kitchen garden has had a makeover, with an attractive range of perennials which look great now, and lots of different bulbs to brighten up the garden over the Spring time. What a difference a day's work has made to the garden!



Carl, Timothy and Jamie look very proud of their work, and Chris was happy to have such a great team to work with!

# Why not...

...try growing bulbs in glass vases and displaying them on window sills? Just sit the bulbs on stones or glass beads with enough water to reach the bottom of the bulb and watch the roots develop, followed by the leaves and flower head. It's fascinating, and can bring a little bit of garden cheer inside, while the weather restricts our enjoyment of it outside.





## Tulips Have a Long History!

**Spring just wouldn't be the same** without that magical splash of colour that flowering bulbs can bring. Snowdrops, the first to appear, bring a feeling of optimism to us all that the Winter is moving on, and Spring is (hopefully), just around the corner. But they all have a story to tell, and tulips are no different!

**Tulips have a rich** and colourful history that spans continents and centuries. Originally native to Central Asia, tulips were cultivated by the Turks as early as 1000 AD.

**By the 11th century**, wild tulips could be found in the gardens of Ottoman palaces. The Ottoman Empire saw tulips as symbols of paradise and perfection, culminating in the "Tulip Era" of the early 18th century, when tulip festivals flourished, and trading tulips outside the capital was a punishable offence.

**Tulips were first introduced** to Europe in the 16th century and quickly became popular, particularly in the Netherlands. Their vibrant colours and exotic origins sparked a frenzy known as "Tulip Mania" in the 1630s. At its height, a single tulip bulb could cost more than a house. Though the market eventually collapsed, Tulip Mania remains one of history's most famous financial bubbles.

**Today**, tulips are cultivated worldwide, with the Netherlands leading the global production. The country dedicates over 60,000 acres to tulip farming, and its iconic Keukenhof Gardens in Amsterdam, attracts visitors from around the world each spring.

**Tulips capture the hearts of** gardeners, photographers and artists alike. These stunning examples of fine art paintings are by our very own talented Andrea, who works in our fabulous shop!



## Home Grown is Best!

**Our Horticap grown** vegetable plants have been hugely popular with our customers this year. Nurturing and growing these plants can be satisfying on many levels, particularly when eating the resulting produce!

We were delighted one weekend when one of our regular families popped in to share their good news.



**7-year-old Alexander** was proud to show us the Pumpkins that he has grown from seedlings he bought from us. We were so impressed that we have pleasure in sharing his success! We can't wait to see what you will be growing next year Alexander?

**We have also** had an abundance of produce here at Horticap this year. Our Apple and Pear trees have been heavy with fruit, and the kitchen garden full of delights that Chris and the Hopkins team use in some of their dishes.

We are lucky that Timothy is tall enough to pick the ones at the top!

Our home grown Rhubarb and Blackberry cake made by student Matthew also went down a storm!



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## Dates for your diary:

### 1st December

Wreaths will be available to buy from the nursery and Hopkins Christmas Menu will be introduced

### 2nd December

Colin Alderson, former Chef to the Royal Household event. Tickets are £15, available from the shop

### 6th & 7th December

Book your place and buy your ticket at the shop for £5 per child, to meet Santa in our Santa Trail

### 23rd December

Our students Christmas Party and all of Horticap will be CLOSED.

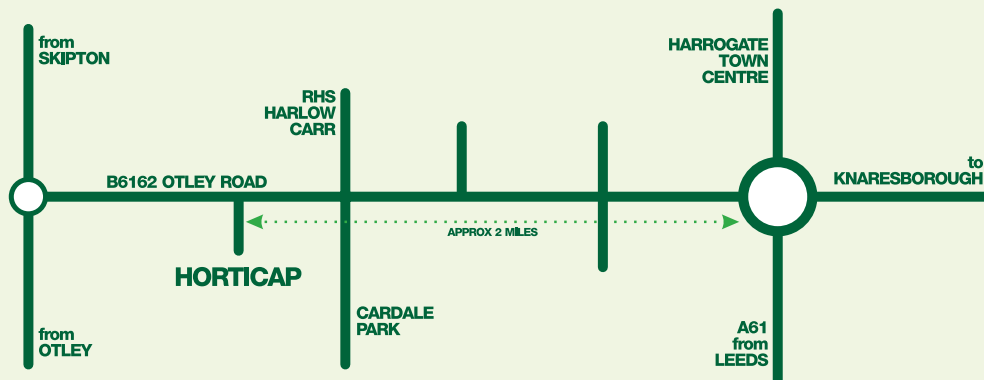
**We remain closed until Monday 29th December**

**29th to 31st December - Open 10am - 4pm.**

**1st January 2026 - Closed**

**2nd to 4th January - Open 10am - 4pm**

**5th January - Open as normal**



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