

horticap

Growing Together



Supporting and educating
at Bluecoat Wood Nurseries

www.horticap.org

Issue 1 2026

Just as we thought we wouldn't have any more rain, fog and wind, 2026 has so far delivered it in abundance! The rare sunny days have been glorious however, and here at Horticap it takes a lot more than dismal weather to get us down.

We love to share this sense of positivity, so here are the fabulous spring like smiles of Pat and Hannah to welcome you to the first newsletter of 2026.

We enjoyed a wonderful and heart-warming Christmas season, and we hope that all our friends and customers did too. We have pleasure in sharing just few of our Christmas party memories in this newsletter.



It was a joy to see everyone return from their Christmas break, looking well and eager start the new year productively. We have introduced some of the work we do at this time of year later on, and understandably, the work focusses on preparation for the seasons ahead. It is varied and demanding work, and our students all rise to the task!

But plant care does continue as we grow our stock from small plugs through to more mature plants to sell when they are ready. Our sales glasshouse continues to be stocked with a lovely range of seasonal plants, some of which flower beautifully in the early spring, and are scented. Our new polytunnels have also definitely proved their value in keeping the plants sheltered this winter!



Although our contract work takes a break at this time of year, it is the perfect time to identify items here than could benefit another charity. This is highlighted in our piece about Harrogate's Cone Exchange.

Our association and friendships with like-minded charities is important to us, and benefits us all. So if you see our vehicles driving around at the moment, we might just be doing a favour for one of our charity friends.

Our workshop is always full of industrious students, but really comes into its own while our preparation work goes on. It is well stocked with virtually every piece of equipment we need to create the planters and bird boxes we sell, and other items we make to enhance our own site. It's heated too, which makes working in there very appealing!

The students' Mess Room refurbishment is well under way, using funds raised from our 40th Birthday year, with our students making a huge practical contribution to its creation. Utilising the area better, with new lockers and better changing facilities will make a big difference to their time here, and moves



their existing facilities into the 21st century! We shall give updates throughout the year.

Our volunteers are an amazing bunch, and it's great that volunteer Darren leads a dance session when he is here. More smiles to continue our newsletter with, as Simon, Victoria, Dominic and Ross enjoy a dance.

Along with house plants and new gifts arriving in our shop, and a scrumptious new menu being served in Hopkins, we really are revving ourselves up for a great 2026. We all hope that we will continue to welcome everyone to this little oasis of horticulture in Harrogate, to enable us to continue the valuable work Horticap aims to achieve on a daily basis.



The Horticap Team



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Christmas 2025

We love a good party here at Horticap, and our Christmas parties are simply the best! Students, staff, volunteers and trustees are all invited to enjoy a tremendous lunch, a cracking quiz and a lot of fun! It is not often that we have the opportunity to all be together, which makes this party all the more memorable.

Of course, Christmas starts much earlier than December for us, as Christmas stock starts arriving in the shop and Hopkins, and our wreath and tree orders come flooding in. Our students keep busy making pretty angels and upcycling cards to sell in the shop, as well as helping to make the Christmas cakes which were for sale in the café (and went down very well!).

Victoria was delighted to sell a stunning wreath to our good friend Gareth Southgate, who looked very pleased with it!



Our Christmas party day was full of surprises, including the opportunity for our students to admire, and sit in some amazing classic cars, kindly arranged by Simon Cotton. We were all impressed with them (a huge understatement), and it was lovely to see everyone enjoy the experience. Then it was time for our Christmas lunch, beautifully prepared by the wonderful Hopkins team!



We are grateful to those families and carers who ensured that our students could attend this party, and to the local organisations who very generously contributed to the gift bags that every student received. We are always quite overwhelmed with the kindness that is shown towards Horticap throughout the year and at Christmas, and this year has been no exception!



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By Royal Appointment

It was with great pride that Ian, our Chief Operating Officer, and his wife Jenny, an instructor, headed off to London to represent Horticap at the Princess of Wales's Christmas Carol Concert which was held at Westminster Abbey.

Courtesy of the kind invitation from Buckingham Palace, via the Lord Lieutenant of North Yorkshire, the "Together at Christmas" service was a gathering of people from across the country, to thank the wide range of charitable work done by so many people.

Ian said "Attendees were asked to pass on the Princess of Wales's thanks to all who give to ensure charitable work and organisations continue to provide the support to enrich people's lives. The event was a wonderful service of carols, readings and some solo performances. It was a great privilege to represent Horticap at such a joyous occasion".



Mirroring the kind words of Catherine, Princess of Wales, we celebrate over 20 years of our friendship with the Cone Exchange

– Chris Powell of the Cone Exchange explains

"The Cone Exchange is the flagship community project of Bettys & Taylors Group. The team re-purposes waste materials from businesses, alongside donations from the local community – literally turning trash into treasure, raising funds for local good causes, such as Horticap, and creating a sense of community and new skills for all those involved.



At the heart of the Cone Exchange is the commitment to see potential in everything and everybody, and we see those values mirrored back in all the amazing work the team at Horticap does through their resourcefulness and creativity, and generosity of spirit. It feels like such a natural fit and a true partnership. Our partnership with Horticap has been one of the most rewarding experiences as we work so closely together, and we've been able to support each other on such a variety of projects".

Student Focus – Paula and Pippa

Paula and Pippa are house mates in their supported living home, and work at Horticap one day a week. Paula has been with us for a long time, since December 1991 with Pippa nearing her 10-year anniversary with us, having started in December 2016.



With strong personalities and a keenness to achieve, they bring fun and colour to our day.

Paula is undoubtedly our Queen of labels, and plays an important part in sorting them out for us. She also adores Abba and having a sing and a dance when one of their songs comes on the radio.



She loves pretty colours, and can often be found admiring the summer blooms.

Occasionally, Paula likes to have a change from labels, to pot on some plants. After nearly 35 years here, she definitely knows the technique!

Pippa is always ready to get going when she arrives, and is highly proficient at the jobs she is asked to do. Our little pocket rocket ploughs through potting on plug plants, wreath decorations and more, with a speed we do not often see!

She is also a keen artist and loves the days when she joins the music group, throwing herself into these activities with her usual enthusiasm. Her drumming skills are fantastic!



Plants are our business, but it doesn't stop there!

If you thought this time of year would be a quiet time for Horticap, you would be very wrong! Behind the scenes everyone is busy refurbishing all the areas for the upcoming season, and preparing the show garden.

With all the left over Christmas decorations tidied away, and before we go into full summer bedding plant production, there are glasshouses to clean and benches to refurbish. It is important that this preparation is well planned to accommodate both the students' needs, and the conditions that the plants require.



Every year after Christmas, our top glasshouse, that sees the majority of the summer bedding plant work, is fully checked over to ensure the benches are in good condition. This entails sanding and repainting the bench frames and replacing bench tops that have rotted. This year, we are replacing these bench tops with much sturdier ones, in the hope that

they last longer, are more sustainable, and stop the need to use plastic sheeting as a cover.



The types of skills required of our students are wide ranging. From manual handling the old bench tops safely, to cleaning, sanding and repainting the metal frames, and refitting the work tops, our students are supervised to ensure their safety. PPE is always a priority here, as is the importance of following instructions.

What a great job everyone does, now all we need are the plug plants!



Our sales glasshouse has also had some TLC, improving access, and the facilities for our students to work in. Of course, our perennial plant work continues all year round. This is the perfect time to pot on plants that have been nurtured through the winter, and move things around to accommodate seasonal plants and shrubs. It will not be long before the whole glasshouse will be full of the scent of early flowering plants such as Magnolias and Camellias and what a selection we have!

The benches here have also been refurbished. We are always keen to adapt to the ever growing need of Horticap, and for the students to enjoy the different jobs they need to do.



Chris has been supporting our students to develop their cooking skills too. Many of our students cook at home, so he has been encouraging them to include some of his delicious recipes in their repertoire. They always make plenty so that all the students can enjoy what they have made, that always go down very well!



The work here is very weather and season dependent, and this is just a small snapshot of other jobs happening around and about. In addition, occasion cards are being recycled into new cards to sell, the West Wing is being creative, and new gift and plant stock is arriving regularly, which keeps us all extremely busy!



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



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Safeguarding Understanding Autism
 Woodwork Machinery Hedge Laying
Principles of working with Adults with Learning Disabilities
 Safe use of Pesticides

Horticap recruits staff, volunteers and trustees with a wide range of experiences and passions, both personally and professionally, to work with its students.

We are incredibly lucky to have such dedicated staff, volunteers and trustees, who just love being at Horticap and sharing their time, promoting well-being and supporting our students.

Some come with experience of working with children and adults with learning disabilities, either at home or in schools and centres, and others come with very different backgrounds. But everyone brings their own unique contribution, which together makes for a successful and productive team.

Horticap has responsibility to both staff and students regarding safety, both on a personal level, and environmentally too. Regular risk assessments are done, and wide ranging training provided to ensure that Horticap complies with its legal requirements.



Everyone supporting our students has to satisfy the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and receives Safeguarding, Health and Safety and First Aid training on an ongoing basis. Staff are trained within departments to enable them to keep up with Horticap's needs, the latest legislation, and as part of their own professional development.

In fact, there is a combination of well over 40 legal requirements and training courses that Horticap is obliged to offer, which in itself is a huge administrative task! The word cloud here shows just a very small selection, and of course, the list grows longer as we are able to diversify further!

It also comes at a cost! Horticap is no different to any charity, or business, in that costs go way beyond what is often seen on the surface. This is why we are always so grateful for the constant and generous support we get. Moving with the times, and ensuring our students get the best of all that we can provide is important to us, and important for them. We could not do it without your support!

Thank you so much!



“The Things That Make Me Different Make Me”

And just like that, we are back in the Garden Show season, and we have got a wonderful show garden to delight visitors at the Harrogate Spring Flower Show this year! It has been months in the planning and creating, and is undeniably a Horticap Show Garden with all the character that we are famous for. Regular show goers will remember some of the themes we have previously done, The Magic Roundabout, Wallace and Gromit, The Lord of the Rings, and our fabulously ambitious Yorkshire Garden featuring the very fierce Nora Batty... and a viaduct!

Our trademark figures are made by volunteer Helen, who has kindly returned to us to contribute some familiar characters from a famous book. Instructors Erica and Emma have led this wonderful garden design, but what is the theme this year...Erica, reveals all!



“We love bees at Horticap, and our Hortibees produce the most amazing honey!

They’ve had such a busy year, and we have plenty of jars to sell in our shop...so imagine how excited we are to be returning to the Harrogate Spring Flower Show in 2026 with bees and honey very much on the menu!

This year, we are bringing the honey muncher of all munchers in the form of Winnie the Pooh, and he’s bringing a few of his friends. Inspired by this classic story, the garden celebrates Horticap’s belief that everyone has something special to offer.

“The Things That Make Me Different Make Me” is a garden about friendship. How we connect, care and belong, even when we are all considered to be a little bit different.



Just as Hundred Acre Wood is home to Pooh’s unique family of friends, so is Horticap to us all, and we aim to create a garden where all our students play their own unique, special part. Both are places where people of all abilities grow together through playfulness and nature”.

“Created by Horticap students, volunteers and staff, the garden tells its own story of teamwork, kindness and friendship and celebrates the things that make us all wonderfully different.

Each student has decorated a cobble which will form part of a painted stream, crossed by a rustic Pooh bridge made by volunteer and trustee Alistair. He’s also built Owl his very own tree house, whilst the students have helped in the making of the signage, painting illustrations for the map, as well as bee painting and checking out the trees during a day trip to Beardsworths Nurseries in Cleckheaton.



Beardsworths kindly offered to donate trees so we can have our own woodland which is amazing. Our day there to choose the trees we needed was brilliant, so a huge thank you to them.

We would also like to thank volunteers Helen and Joan for their hard work and for bringing our story to life with their amazing characters, this garden would just not be the same otherwise”.



This year Winnie the Pooh celebrates 100 years, so even more reason to come and share our garden adventures. Please come and see us, it makes the efforts of the students all the more worthwhile!

See you there!

Scan the QR code for tickets for the Harrogate Spring Flower Show.



...and last year's show garden is all up and running!

Readers of our newsletters will know that our award winning garden from last year's Harrogate Spring Flower Show, was to be installed at the newly opened Harrogate Tesco store. So much planning and work goes into creating show gardens, it was very rewarding for it to become a permanent feature there, and to give shoppers somewhere to sit, and nature thrive!



Those familiar with our own garden, and our numerous show gardens will also know that we love a dry stone wall at Horticap! Many will appreciate that it's an extraordinarily skilled job, so it is great that we have the brilliant Jason and Tracey Potter from Living Stone Dry Stone Walling to work alongside.



Naturally the real garden is much bigger and more detailed than the show garden, and it took Jason and Tracey and their associates many weeks to complete, often fighting the elements! What a fantastic job they have done, and we all watched their progress eagerly as of course, the students were unable to get on with the planting until the dry stone walling was finished. We also had to wait until the Tesco site builders had finished and given us permission to be on site. It felt like a lifetime!

But as soon as they were able to, our students did not waste time in getting to grips with the job in hand. We had been nurturing the plants on site at Horticap, so after preparing the ground, the first job was moving them all down to the site. There were loads!



Phil was proud to present a dry stone model of the garden wall, beautifully made by Terry Bollem, to Tesco CEO, Ken Murphy.



This whole project has been a long time in the making, and the benefit to Horticap and the students of working collaboratively with Tesco is enormous. Having the garden for customers to enjoy fits with our community work, and a contract to maintain the site means a continuation of work for the students!

WE WORK CLOSELY WITH YOU TO ADVISE ON SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS AND PROCESSES, MINIMISING WASTE THROUGH INNOVATION FROM THE INKS AND PAPERS WE SOURCE TO THE WAY WE MANUFACTURE AND DELIVER. TEAM HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABSOLUTELY COMMITTED TO REDUCING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF PRINT.

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Garden Hints and Tips for the Season

What a great season Spring is for getting to grips with the garden after the Winter, and preparing it for better weather. Here are just a few seasonal tips through March, April and May, that we hope will be useful.

March

Specific species of Roses have different needs when pruning, and taking advice from their labels is advisable. However, as a general rule, late Winter/early Spring is a good time to prune them. We have some general tips that might be beneficial to follow, in order to get the best from your roses, and to keep them healthy.



- Always use clean, sharp secateurs for pruning and cut no more than 5 mm above a bud at a downwards angle, so that water runs away from, rather than settling around, the new bud area.
- Cut out dead, diseased and spindly stems to allow for a good air flow throughout the plant.
- Trace where suckers are growing from and cut or pull them out from as low down as possible.



Horticap sells a wonderful selection of Summer flowering bulbs and March is the perfect time to plant them directly into your garden, or in pots and containers. They are an easy way to brighten up all areas of the garden. Keep an eye out in our greenhouse for when we get them in, along with the first early seed potatoes and onion sets.

March is a good time to lift and divide Summer flowering perennials such as Agapanthus, Crocosmia and Geranium. Not only does this increase your own supply of plants, it promotes strong, healthy plants by giving them a better growing space and the chance to access more nutrients.

The Spring is such an important time for us to be looking out for our wildlife too. Gardens can play a huge part in supporting their success by putting fresh water out and ensuring that frozen water is dealt with to provide access. Birds need feeding at this time with nutritious nuts and seeds, fat balls and fruit such as apples.

We often see more birds in the Spring and they will be starting to nest. Putting up a nesting box and watching them set up home and raising a family can be a lovely way to enjoy your garden. Insects will start to emerge so providing pollen rich flowering plants helps to support them.



April

As daylight lengthens and the soil warms up after the winter, it is always lovely to see the garden really start to wake up.

• It's a great time to sow hardy annual, wild flower and herb seeds directly into the ground. We have a huge range of quality seeds, peas and beans on sale in the shop to choose from. **Hint:** We find that sowing and growing wildflower seeds in cell trays, means that they can be grown where they are specifically wanted.

• Late frosts and cold winds can damage tender plant growth, and they will need some protection. Fleece is an ideal fabric, but just moving plants to a more sheltered spot can help. Some early flowering shrubs, such as Camellias, do not like early Spring sunshine as it can spoil their flower display.

• Second early seed potatoes can be planted.



May

“N’er cast a clout till May is out” reminds us of how fickle the British weather can be, and that despite the increased daylight, which is a dream for gardens and gardeners alike, late frosts can still be problematic for young plants, so being vigilant is important!

• Main crop potatoes should be in by now, earthing up as the green shoots grow.

• Lift and divide clumps of Spring flowering bulbs and flowers. Daffodils, snowdrops, primulas, winter aconites, crocuses and grape hyacinth are all plants that benefit from dividing and replanting if they have become congested clumps.

• Our Summer bedding plants, grown and nurtured by our students in greenhouses, should be hardened off before planting outside. It is always recommended that bedding plants are planted out **only** when the last frosts have finished.

Top tip: We always suggest that your plants start the Spring with a good feed to help them flourish! Don't forget to remove Spring bulb flowers as they finish, leaving the greenery to die back naturally, letting the goodness go back into the bulb, all ready for a spectacular display next year!

Student Focus - James

James has been attending Horticap since March 2011, spending a day a week with us. In that time, he has become an accomplished member of the team, and his unfailing good humour is an absolute delight.

Any team with James in benefits from his considerable abilities and attitude. He is as happy off-site working on contract work as he is potting on delicate plug plants or painting benches, and all instructors know that tasks allocated to him will be fully completed.



James was even able to keep us all cheery through lockdown, when his parents sent us regular photographs of him growing sunflowers. We missed seeing the students so much through this time, and it was lovely to see he was keeping well, and still being industrious!



James loves music and has proved to be rather an accomplished pianist, and playing for our Christmas party. But he also keeps us all happy throughout the day with his singing to the radio. He has a gift for remembering lyrics, and we love it!

James also attends Open Country, a charity supporting people with disabilities to access and enjoy the countryside, and really enjoys it!



Spring, and a stunning moment in time for the magnificent Magnolia

Loved as a wonderfully ornamental and statuesque tree that brightens up our gardens in Spring, Magnolias have a long and fascinating history. Fossilised evidence from the Cretaceous period proves that they were one of the first flowering plants on Earth, when dinosaurs still roamed the Earth! Magnolia trees even pre-date bees and relied on beetles, specifically Archaic sap beetles, to pollinate them. The flowers evolved sturdy, leather like “petals” to withstand the heavy beetles crawling into them.

Technically, Magnolia “petals” are actually tepals, a term used when the outer part of the flower cannot be distinguished as either a petal or a sepal (the often green, protective outer part).

There are well over 200 species and two main types: evergreen with its dark green glossy leaves, and deciduous. These lose their leaves in the winter and display their flowers on bare branches in the spring.

Magnolias can be shrubs and trees of all sizes, making them suitable for planting in both gardens and pots, particularly the smaller plants. They like to be in a sheltered but light situation, with damp, well-drained fertile soil, although some do need acidic conditions. Flower production can be impeded if they are in exposed sites or dry soil.

Magnolia flowers are famous for their citrus scent, often popular for use in perfumes and scented candles.

These beautiful trees have played a key role in cultures around the world. With many species being native to Asia, they have become a symbol of nobility, perseverance and purity in Chinese and Japanese cultures, with the bark being used in Chinese medicine to treat both mental and physical issues.



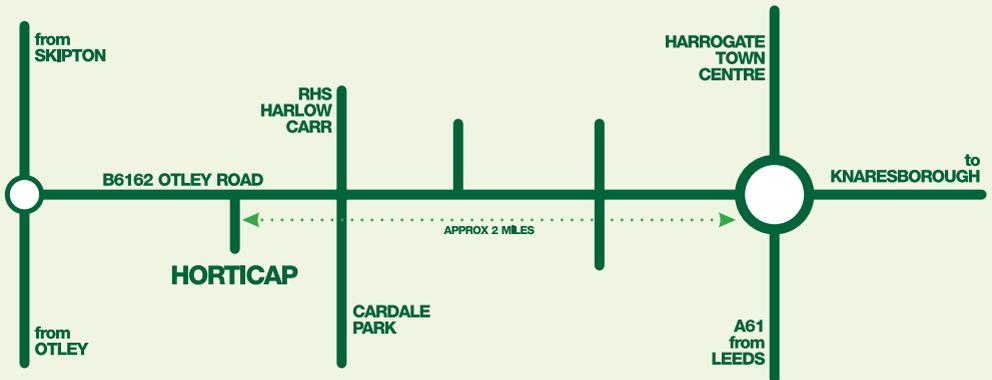
Here at Horticap, we have a lovely range of Magnolias for sale which are carefully cared for by our students, and who love it when the flowers come out and the greenhouse is filled with their perfume. Spring is a great time to plant them, which gives them time to acclimatise to their new home!

Dates for your diary:

Come and visit our brilliant
Show Garden at:
Harrogate Spring Flower Show
Thursday 23 – Sunday 26 April
2026

Horticap is open 7 days a week,
with our magical Nature Trail
accessible every day.

We often have a quiz to follow
too, just ask at the shop for a
quiz sheet.



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