

horticap

Growing Together



Supporting and educating
at Bluecoat Wood Nurseries

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Issue 2 2026

What a busy time of year this is at Horticap. The Spring brings lots of plug plants for our students to pot on for our summer bedding and hanging baskets, seemingly never-ending perennials to care for and of course, a show garden to create for the 2026 Harrogate Spring Flower Show.

It seems incredible that we are already on to our second newsletter this year, but as always, there is always so much to tell!

Our students continue to work on their Horticultural Capabilities, along with developing skills in arts and crafts, music, customer service skills in the shop, and continuing their work experience in Hopkins.



Alongside all this, site and provision improvement continues with the installation of a new, increased capacity, septic tank. We were expecting the installing of it to take much longer than it did, so disruption to our students' routine, and to customers, was kept to a minimum. It was very exciting watching the work involved, with a huge hole being dug and a new tank arriving. It certainly stopped work for a while as we don't often see such work going on here!

We have also made a start on improving the student mess and boot room.

Our fundraising events have included a Line Dancing event, in collaboration with St. Michael's Hospice which was a huge success, and a sponsored walk by trustee Alistair, walking 70 km to mark his 70th birthday.

Hopkins has continued to develop its partner relationships with sponsors, with Chris hosting a networking event for existing, and potential sponsors. It is becoming increasingly important for charities to explore alternative ways to fundraise, and Horticap feels it is perfectly placed to offer companies and organisations a great way for them to invest in their own community, by supporting us for years to come.



We are very proud of our amazing result from the Harrogate Spring Flower Show. We received so many positive comments about our show garden, and we share some great photographs in this edition, but here is one of Owl in his house to whet your appetite.

It was a delight to share in a special occasion as we celebrated the addition of some new Ambassadors to Horticap. We all spent a very sunny morning under the cover of our beautiful blossom trees and welcomed Alan Titchmarsh, our Patron, who helped to present their certificates and badges. Again, we share some happy memories in the middle pages.

We had fun trying out Padel at Harrogate Tennis Club. It made a great change to be in the dry!



We hope you all enjoy reading about life at Horticap and that you all continue to visit us and appreciate the work our students do here. Horticap would not be here if it wasn't for them, and we would struggle to exist without you all coming to visit, buy a plant, gift or coffee. As always, a heartfelt thank you from

The Horticap Team



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The 2026 Harrogate Flower Show

Well...where to start? The concept, the student engagement, the figures, the community support and collaboration, the highs and lows, or go straight to the result?!

Straight to the result it is!

After over a year of thinking, planning, lots of blue paint, plant gathering and care, papier mache figures, collecting logs and old bits of wood, our Show Garden came together to wow visitors at the Harrogate Spring Flower Show. But not only visitors, as the judges were so impressed that the Horticap Show Garden was awarded both a **Premier Gold, and also a Special Award**, being the Highest Award Given to a Community Garden.

Needless to say, on site, the students anxiously awaited the results of the judging and we were all thrilled when the good news came through! Under the guidance of Erica, who designed and coordinated this project (when normally at this time of year she is juggling summer bedding plants by the thousand), she guided the students with many and varied tasks. She has had lots of support, from everyone really, but particularly from Emma who helped to pull it all together and ensure that "The Things That Make Me Different Make Me" show garden absolutely shone, and told the story and ethos of Horticap. Friendship, how we connect, caring and belonging is a strong message to portray, and the Winnie the Pooh story simply fitted perfectly.



The aim was to create a garden where every one of our students played their own part, and they did! Each student individually decorated a cobble for the stream, some helped to design the Hundred Acre Wood map, bees were painted, signs were made, plants were grown, and of course, our students helped on site to build it.

Erica and Emma would like to thank everyone, and particularly our volunteers for their magnificent contributions. We couldn't do it without them!

The show itself was a success all round. There were crowds milling around and the sun shone all the time. What more could anyone want? Naturally though, all good things come to an end, and close of play on Sunday came round very quickly, which meant taking everything apart. This is an enormous job, and it needed all hands-on deck over several days to bring everything back to Horticap. It's a good job our students always rise to the occasion, and get the job done!



And next year?.. let's just enjoy this one for now, but someone, somewhere will be planning!



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Dr Michael Rowbottom

Mike and Judith Rowbottom have looked after our honey bees for over 15 years, and it was with such sadness when we heard that Mike had suddenly passed away. He and his wife have been a constant presence here at Horticap, and made a long-standing impact to our growth.



Their regular checks on the hives throughout the years, have always generated an air of excitement and mystery when turning up in their white, alien like bee keeping suits

Mike's warmth and generosity in giving his time and expertise harvesting and jarring up our honey, has greatly contributed to the building blocks of our sustainability ethics, and to the income of our charity.

Judith is now teaching us how to look after the bees so we can take over their care and the harvesting of the honey, which we now sell in our café Hopkins

We have also been saddened by the news that three other good Horticap friends have passed away.



Jenny Beaton worked at Horticap as an Instructor, and later as a volunteer, is fondly remembered for her dedication to supporting our students in their work.

Lesley Mann was a previous Shop Manager, creating a vibrant and welcoming environment for our customers to visit.



Harry Wilson was a regular visitor, customer and friend to Horticap for many years. Harry's whole family are passionate supporters, and it has always been lovely to see them here.



Mike, Jenny, Lesley and Harry have all contributed to make Horticap what it is today, and every one of us sends our heartfelt condolences to Mike's, Jenny's, Lesley's and Harry's families.

Cornus kousa

Our featured plant is the **Cornus kousa**, a flowering dogwood, which is particularly stunning when it flowers in late Spring and early Summer.



This hardy plant, that can be grown as a tree or shrub, is recognised historically as representing hope and new beginnings. It's ability to withstand challenging environmental stresses is also seen as mirroring the human spirit's ability to survive and thrive through difficulties.

Kousa dogwoods represent different meanings in different cultures. Commonly found in Japanese gardens and temples, the tree is considered a natural piece of art, heralding peace and serenity. In Western cultures, the flowers are considered to symbolise grace and endurance, and are often used in literature and art.

The distinctive flowers with star-shaped petals symbolise resilience and renewal, making it a pertinent choice for celebrating personal milestones.

The flowering period is considered to be a poignant reminder of the passage of time and the enduring power of nature's cycles. The flowers are also considered to offer both comfort and inspiration in times of uncertainty.



We love this beautiful plant here at Horticap, and Timothy is proud to help care for them. The **Cornus kousa** would seem to fit well with Horticap as it captivates hearts and minds, and its continued presence offers comfort and strength.

Garden Hints and Tips for the Season

Hasn't it been lovely to see some blue sky and feel the sun on our faces. The brightness of the spring flowers has been a welcome relief, and has definitely kept us cheery up here at Horticap! Here are just a few seasonal gardening ideas we would like to share, to help you through June, July and August, that we hope will be useful.

June

With the temperatures rising, this is the perfect time to be putting those bedding plants out and potting up your hanging baskets and pots.

Now is a good time to prune Spring flowering shrubs, unless there are specific instructions for a particular plant.

Tomato plants should be starting to grow well, and will need feeding once the first flowers appear and starts to set fruit. This will need to be weekly as the tomatoes grow. Nip out side shoots too to prevent excessive foliage, and ensure the plants energy goes into the produce.

Stake tall plants to give them that extra support.

Top tip

Putting a decent layer of mulch on your garden keeps weeds down and retains moisture which saves water!

July

Dead head flowering plants regularly to encourage your plants to produce more. Many plants will respond to this, and keeps the garden looking beautiful. Bees and butterflies will also thank you for the extra pollen.

Pick produce from fruit and veg plants as they ripen, and keep the plants well-watered.

Do not worry if your lawn starts looking dry and neglected. Grass is a very resilient plant and will respond when it rains again.



John is an expert at watering plants!

Some flowering plants such as Delphiniums and Geraniums can be cut back after flowering, which can promote further flowering. All plants will benefit from a regular feed and watering.

Try collecting the seeds from Poppies and Love-in-a-Mist when the seed heads are dry and the dry seeds can be heard rattling around. This will ensure a constant supply of these attractive plants, without them taking over!



August

Continue to deadhead flowering plants regularly to keep the strength in the plant, rather than seed production.

Water, feed and deadhead plants in hanging baskets to promote a long flowering season.

If Alpines have bare patches, fill the gaps with gritty compost. This could support the plants to have new growth.

Wisteria can be pruned during July and August, and again in January and February. Not only does pruning keep growth under control, it will improve the flower display.

Our Best Top Tip

Make sure that you sit, relax and enjoy your garden and benefit from all your hard work. Sit and breathe in the atmosphere you have created, and when you need new plants, please consider choosing them from our fabulous range of student grown plants, all grown with love!



Welcoming our new Ambassadors

Readers of our final newsletter of 2025, will have read of the importance of our Ambassadors. These are individuals who are recognised for their passion for Horticap, and who have the ability to open doors for us to be introduced to other influential business people.

It is with great pleasure that we share the news that we have “recruited” some more Ambassadors, which of course meant celebrating their addition to the Horticap family with a bit of a “do”.

We were thrilled that our lovely Patron, Alan Titichmarsh, was able to fit us in to his busy schedule, and present the honours.

We are proud to now announce that:

John Herridge (1), a Director/Board Member at Golden Fry Foods Ltd., **Colin Alderson** (2), former Pastry Chef to HM Queen Elizabeth II., **Tricia Stewart** (3), an original Calendar Girl, **David Griffiths** (4), author and drystone wall designer and **Mark Lancaster** (5), Director at Colour It In, Ripon, have joined David Hayes, Tim Crowther and Simon Cotton as Horticap Ambassadors. Welcome to you all, and we hope to see you soon.

This celebration was such a lovely occasion. There were sausage and bacon butties in hand, the sun was shining and our new electric vehicle was there to be admired. With all the sponsors names now included in the livery, the van was a timely reminder of how important donations of any kind are invaluable to Horticap, as a charity.



Bobsleighting at Horticap?

Well, not quite but we all had a real treat when Axel Brown brought his 2026 Winter Olympic Bobsleigh to our Ambassador Day. Axel, good friend and volunteer at Horticap, was the Captain and Pilot for the Trinidad and Tobago team. Based in Harrogate, Axel spent time with our students and visitors to tell us all about the competition and how the bumps and scratches appeared on the bobsleigh, and thankfully not on the team! Alan and his wife, Alison were very interested.

The weather really could not have contrasted more than when Axel and his team were haring down the track at the Eugenio Monti Sliding Centre in Cortina d'Ampezzo in Italy.



During the Winter Olympics, our students enjoyed watching the teams progress and cheered them on and waved flags to encourage them on. It was exciting to watch, although a little nerve-racking. Axel was kind enough to send several videos to us which kept us all involved. It was fabulous for us all to feel part of this wonderful achievement, thank you!

Student Profile - Will

Will joined Horticap in June 2022, attending one day a week. He came with little experience of the type of work we do here, and with help from his support worker, Will has become a far more confident worker.

He has learned to use all kinds of machinery and tools, understanding the need to work carefully and safely. As a keen gym user, Will has all the power needed for horticultural work!



Will has a particular talent for song writing, with rap lyrics being a particular strength of his. He will often spend some of his time here with paper and pen, and is always keen to share the results.

He also has a passion for art. Although joining in with others can be difficult for Will, he thoroughly enjoyed being part of a small group that worked with Mel, an art student, to do a clay workshop.



Congratulations!

Frankie is a familiar face in Hopkins@Horticap, and we were all delighted to hear that Frankie had been awarded the Harrogate College Learner of the Year Award at the Luminate Apprenticeship Awards 2026. Of course, we all know how brilliant she is, but to have it recognised like this feels just right. Done properly, an apprenticeship is hard work and takes real dedication, and Frankie achieves this in buckets. But Frankie really has gone above and beyond this by being absolutely brilliant with her kindness to, and admiration for, our students. She is a lovely team member, and a real asset to our charity! Congratulations Frankie, we hope you stay with us for a very long time.



We would also like to thank one of our trustees Alistair, who walked the Six Dales Trail with his friend John Wainwright, raising funds for Horticap.



This is a 70 km walk between Otley and Middleham in North Yorkshire. The route takes in Wharfedale, Washburndale, Nidderdale, Colsterdale, Coverdale and Wensleydale. He had been practising hard for this walk, and we are delighted that he has raised nearly £3,000 for us, to further our work with our students. Thank you Alistair, same time next year???

Do you have plans to fundraise for Horticap? How about hosting a coffee morning or doing a sponsored walk or run? We would love to hear about it and celebrate your achievement in our newsletter!

We really do have some talented people at Horticap. If you have visited Horticap, it is hard to miss the stunning artwork that makes up the board above the order point, or the intricate crochet creations that adorn the Hopkins walls. Gemma and Sarah, who use their skills to create this friendly and welcoming artwork to Horticap's Hopkins, were delighted to be asked to put their mark on our Show Garden, joining in with putting in finishing touches to the show garden.



We did say the 2026 Harrogate Spring Flower Show Garden was a collective creation!

The fabulous sign posts, made by Karl, were written and painted in true Pooh style by Gemma. As well as drawing the information board in Hopkins, Gemma's talents can also be seen nestled in the garden in the shape of the giant green wellies. They are hard to miss! Not only do they look fabulous here, but they even appeared in Panto too, for the Pannal Players!



There was a huge demand from visitors to the show for the crocheted menagerie that Sarah made to decorate various areas of the garden. Many were disappointed that they were not for sale, but all the creatures were destined to join all the other beautiful pieces made by Sarah, and displayed at Horticap. Sarah does all this in her free time, and has really brightened up a rather drab wall! So, if you want to see the fun creations you saw at the show, or the other artwork around the site, then our advice would be to come and have a cuppa and sweet treat and browse the gallery while you are here.



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Using music and sound to support well-being

In amongst the hustle and bustle of the Horticap day, our passion for helping our students to thrive knows no bounds. In addition to the wonderful horticultural work they all achieve here, we also recognise the therapeutic value that music can bring to people with learning difficulties.

We know that our students enjoy music, with many of them singing along to familiar songs or having a little dance in the greenhouse, and it's a joy to see.

But we take it one step further here by offering weekly music sessions which our students love. With the opportunity to listen to music together and learn new songs, they are able to improvise with instruments to create a group interaction through both sound, and singing. Their music, created with piano, drums and a variety of percussion instruments become a shared experience, through the exploration of sound and rhythm, and how it makes them feel.



The therapeutic benefits of music sessions like these are immeasurable to our students, with research telling us that language and communication skills can be improved through improved interaction, listening, attention, increased eye contact and engagement, vocalization, and self-expression. Social skills and behaviour can be influenced by participating in inclusive group music sessions, with the potential to gain an increased ability to self-regulate, take turns, build self-esteem and confidence. What is in no doubt is that they love it!

With several sessions each week, Beth is able to delve into the different likes and talents of each student she has in her groups. She adds "it has been wonderful to see Andrew conducting us, Edward drumming and

hear Charlottes beautiful singing. Shane, Jamie and Scott shine at playing the piano and Pippa is fascinated with the guitar. The 3 Hannahs supply the group with lots of song suggestions, and Paula told the group "I love it!" when experimenting with the rainmaker".



We are lucky at Horticap that one of our instructors, Beth, is a musician who not only is a singer-songwriter, but has a background working in Speech and Language Therapy. She says "we really love interacting and connecting through our music sessions at Horticap, and feel that music will continue to live and grow here".

Beth loves to extend these sessions by introducing her sound healing instruments for relaxation and mindfulness, including Koshi chimes, a native American flute and singing bowls.



Student Focus - Karl

Everyone knows Karl! Having been at Horticap since April 1989, it is no surprise. Karl has done everything and anything in his time here, and now particularly likes woodwork. His contribution to our show garden of sign posts was integral to the feel and authenticity of the garden.



Of course, he is also affectionately known as Compost Karl as he is an expert at bringing compost bags in to the greenhouse, filling up the bin, mixing the feed and keeping everyone topped up. It is a vital job and we love that he does this!



Karl also loves machinery, so was particularly thrilled when the recent septic tank work was being done. He was always on hand (at a safe distance of course) to make friends with the contractor, and to make sure that the job was done right! Karl was happy with their work!



Beautiful Butterflies

Our passion for providing a home for our Hortibees is well known, and we are proud that our bees are happy, healthy and productive. Recognised widely as important pollinators, bees have an important part to play in the garden, but what about butterflies and what do they bring to our gardens?

Butterflies are such a beautiful insect to see in the garden, hovering over flowers and landing to benefit from rich pollen. Their numbers are an important indicator of a healthy natural environment, so if you are seeing lots of butterflies in your garden, you are providing lots of the right kinds of flowers. In addition to their ability to pollinate plants, they are also an important part of the food chain for birds and bats.



We love seeing the butterflies here at Horticap, and enjoy using their colour and shape as inspiration for art work. There is no end to our student's imagination where art work is concerned! Callum was proud to see his pictures displayed in a Student Art Exhibition,

Gardens have the ability to provide a plentiful supply of nectar for insects, and butterflies will visit when there are plenty of pollen rich flowers that will give them the energy to fly, and breed.

Early Spring flowering plants will help butterflies recharge after either their winter hibernation, or their journey back from southern Europe or Africa. Summer and Autumn pollen rich flowers will give them the best chance of surviving the winter or a successful migration.

There are 60 species of butterflies in the UK. 58 are resident and 2 are migrants. We see lots of varieties in the Horticap garden and Nature Trail. Let us know what varieties you see here, and in your garden, we would love to know!

Some great flowering plants to have in your garden to attract insects, and particularly butterflies include Buddleia, the original Butterfly bush, Verbena, Lavender, Sedum and Echinacea. With a lovely selection of all these in our greenhouse, you will have plenty choose from.



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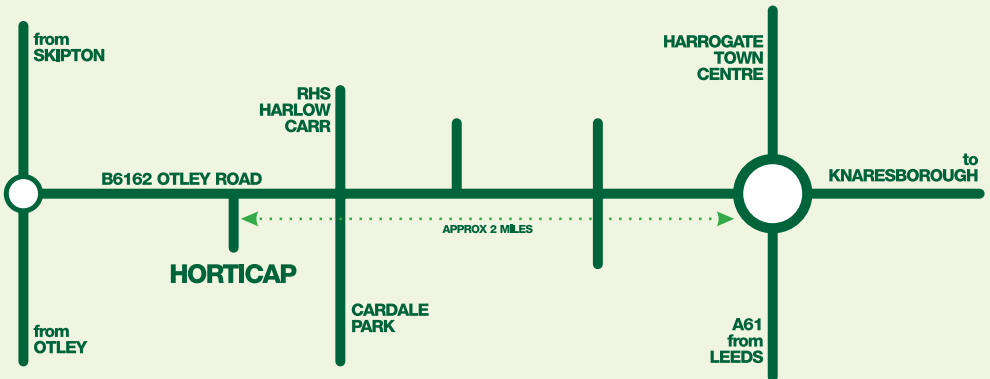
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