horticap

Growing Together



Supporting and educating at Bluecoat Wood Nurseries

www.horticap.org

Issue 4 2026

As the weather gets chillier, everyone at Horticap would like to offer you a warm welcome to the final newsletter of 2026.

We have had a positive year, and have been making progress with all our plans. Our students now have an improved boot room area which is warm and dry. Our new polytunnel has been installed and is housing thousands of plants that will be appearing in the sales greenhouse next year. These improvements are possible through the income generated from shop sales, the café, donations and fundraising, and we are very grateful for all the support we have had this year to further our work.

Horticap is now gearing up for the Christmas season. Our quality trees are expected soon, and our wreath production has been in full flow for weeks. All hand-made here by our industrious students, they are a favourite with our customers. Father Christmas is making an appearance in his grotto again, following his popularity last year. Hopkins@ Horticap has a delicious festive menu, and our shop is full of fabulous gift ideas. In fact, the whole building is looking resplendent with all the welcoming decorations.

Of course, Horticap is all about its students, their work and achievements. This newsletter has some lovely photographs from a very happy awards ceremony that we held recently, to recognise their individual successes. We love these occasions when everyone gets together to celebrate each other, and have a great time!













The last few months have seen our students embarking on a huge variety of jobs, both on and off site. Regular teams go out and about fulfilling our contract and delivery obligations, with others maintaining and improving our facilities on site. The workshop teams have continued with their impressive woodwork skills, and our students who work in both the shop and Hopkins@Horticap are working hard on their customer service skills. The autumn and winter bedding plants, along with the perennials are an ongoing concern for our students, which they manage brilliantly amongst all the Christmas excitement!

Time was found however, for a visit to Living Potential Care Farming CIC at Sicklinghall. Several of our students also attend there, and enjoy telling us stories of the animals and the goats seemed particularly interested in us! We really enjoyed our visit and we all want to thank the team there for their hospitality.



As we move towards the Christmas festivities, we would like to thank everyone who has supported us over 2026, and sincerely hope that we will see you all next year. The shop and cafe hours for this period will be on our website and social media so please call in to see us, and if you are stuck for the perfect gift, our Gift Vouchers may just fit the bill!

With very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. *The Horticap Team*

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Student Focus – Charlotte

Charlotte is a familiar face to customers visiting Horticap on a Monday. She is often seen working in Hopkins, the shop and also in the greenhouses. She takes all her roles seriously, whilst maintaining her wonderful sense of humour.

She has recently celebrated a significant birthday and is now the very proud owner of a puppy called Dobby. As a passionate animal lover, Dobby will have a very happy life with Charlotte.

Charlotte has attended Horticap since 2017, quickly establishing herself as an adaptable and hard-working student, and any day working alongside Charlotte is never dull!







In addition to working here, Charlotte also attends Living Potential at Sicklinghall alongside some of our other students. We are sure the animals there will benefit from her passion and empathy with animals.





Building up to a Horticap Christmas



Charlotte, along with all the students who help in the shop, loves unpacking all the Christmas items we sell. It is such an exciting time for us all, and the atmosphere is always very special.

So, what does the build up to Christmas look like here?



Naturally, the order for our Christmas trees goes in well in advance, we are always delighted with the quality, as are our customers. Many of our customers who come to us for a tree came as children with their parents, and now come with their own. This kind of family tradition is as priceless to us as to them, and we love to hear their family memories and stories.



There is always great excitement when Erica empties the Christmas shed. She likes to check we have ample supplies of wreath rings and the special decorations that we need.



All the decorations on our wreaths are hand wired by our students, volunteers and staff. They are fiddly and take ages, so our preparation can start as early as September.

Hay is used to pad the wreath rings, before they are covered with greenery. We do not do this too early to prevent them drying out. They are then decorated with our hand wired decorations, holly and finished with a beautiful bow in either raffia or bright red ribbon. Each wreath is also personalised by a hand written label to show who made it.

Can we tempt you to advertise in our newsletter?

We have a rare opportunity for you to spread the word about your company in our newsletter. Printed quarterly, and receiving lots of positive feedback, it is full of great information with student news and achievement, horticultural news, and information about our supporters. It is emailed to hundreds of subscribers, posted out to homes in the local area, and are also offered to our visitors at Horticap, and at events including the Harrogate Flower Show and talks. **Our students would love you to join us!**



Please email info@horticap.org for details.

Christmas greetings to all our wonderful customers!

It has been another busy year in the shop, and the students have made fantastic progress over the months. With every shift, they grow in confidence and individuality. They are always delighted to welcome our visitors, and have a chat with you all. As always, our shop is full of Christmas goodies, including Black Yak hats and gloves, small gifts, donated goods and plenty of unexpected finds. As usual, we are taking orders for Christmas trees and wreaths, and we can offer local delivery for a charge of £12.50. All trees and wreaths will be for sale from 28th November.



This year, we would especially like to highlight our recycled cards. With help from our longstanding volunteer Pauline, the student team has made more recycled Christmas card packs than ever before. Last year's packs were very popular, so we have produced extra this year. The cards are trimmed, repurposed onto blank cards, and sold in packs of 10 in three sizes, priced at £4.95, £6.50 and £7.50. They sell out quickly, so do pick them up when you see them! We can only make these cards because of your generous donations, so please remember to bring in your old Christmas and occasion cards in the New Year for recycling.





Local artist Cate Quinn is exhibiting her work upstairs in our cafe, running through to the end of December. All her work will be for sale, alongside her cards as a cheaper option.





Hannah and James loved looking at all the decorations on display.

On behalf of everyone in the shop, and the students who work in the shop, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Carol

Christmas magic awaits at Hopkins@Horticap!



There's something special about Christmas in Yorkshire, and nowhere is that festive feeling more welcoming than at Hopkins@Horticap Café. As the lights twinkle, the Christmas tree sparkles and the decorations bring the building to life, it's the perfect time to step inside, soak up the atmosphere and discover a wonderful world of seasonal food, thoughtful gifts and festive cheer.

We have a fabulous selection of our very own Hopkins homemade Christmas cakes in a variety of sizes, perfect for sharing with family and friends or giving as a special gift. You'll also find locally sourced Christmas puddings, Yorkshire-made jams and chutneys, indulgent fudge and chocolates, biscuits, sweets and locally produced beers. With so many delicious treats to choose from, you can fill your Christmas table, stock up on stocking fillers and support Horticap and local producers at the same time.





Our own Christmas cakes smelt divine whilst baking, and raised plenty of interest form our visitors. Scott was proud to help present them so beautifully too!

Knowing that Horticap students are part of the magic here makes a visit even more meaningful. From helping in the kitchen to developing valuable practical skills, they play an important role in our work. Horticap provides adults with learning disabilities opportunities to learn, develop confidence and gain skills for life, and every visit helps support this important work. Your coffee, lunch or Christmas shopping can make a real difference.

So, this Christmas, why not make Hopkins@Horticap part of your festive traditions? Come for a warming drink and a seasonal treat, browse the shelves for Yorkshire-made goodies and enjoy the Christmas lights and decorations. You may arrive looking for a mince pie or a Christmas cake, but you'll leave with much more than a shopping bag: a little festive happiness and the satisfaction of supporting a wonderful local charity.

Happy Christmas and New Year, from Chris and the Hopkins@Horticap team.





Belgium buns were on the menu for a heartwarming evening of stories from Tricia Stewart, one of the original Calendar Girls, and member of Rylstone and District Women's Institute. It was Tricia who suggested making a tasteful nude calendar as a fun way to raise money to buy a new sofa for the ward where the husband of a fellow WI member, Angela Baker, had sadly died of non-Hodgkin lymphoma in 1998.

From this modest ambition, in memory of Angela's husband John, the story became one of the most amazing and feel-good stories in the country, as the calendar sold 88,000 copies. When published in America the following year, 240,000 copies were sold. With further editions and a brilliant film made, these remarkable ladies raised over £6 million for blood cancer research.

Tricia is a Horticap Ambassador, and very generously offered her time to entertain a full house with her funny, entertaining and engaging tales of the original Calendar Girls calendar. This fundraiser for Horticap was a real treat for everyone attending, and we offer our sincere thanks to Trish. For further information about the work of Blood Cancer UK, please visit bloodcancer.org.uk

Our tools sales have been such a successful venture for us this year, and we see them as an ongoing project. September saw our latest sale and despite the rain and high winds, which offered its own problems on the day, we had a steady stream of happy people who were keen to buy preloved garden equipment, as seen below.

Our busy refurbishing teams work hard on these donated garden tools, and are always very pleased to see them going to new homes, and to have a new purposeful life.

Of course, this is a valuable fundraising opportunity for us too, so if you are in the market for garden tools, please keep an eye out for our social media posts with the date of the next sale. We are also delighted to take in good quality garden equipment, suitable for refurbishing. With your help, tool sales have raised £2,291.51 this year alone. Amazing!





We are always trying to think of innovative ways to increase our revenue, and are very appreciative of those who support us by attending events, offering donations, shopping with us and enjoying our hospitality. Simply sharing a post on social media is beneficial to us!

Thank you to everyone who shares the Horticap message!

Introducing Daphne - our Featured Plant



Winter gardens can look rather drab after the bright summer colours, but there are plants than absolutely shine when they get the chance. Daphne plants belong to the Thymelaeaceae family, bringing interest to the garden and some wonderful colour, and depending on the species, evergreen or deciduous.

Edward shows a bright yellow Daphne gemmate Royal Crown as he was busy putting them out for sale, alongside the pink and white flowered Daphne we have for sale.



With densely arranged fragrant flowers and elongated leaves, Daphne also provide food for insects through the winter and early spring, and some have berries later on that garden birds will appreciate.

Hannah loves the Daphne odora, as it brings a heady scent to the greenhouse when it flowers. An evergreen winter-flowering plant, it was popular as a houseplant in the 1900s, giving a welcoming fragrance to the home. However, it is more familiar as a garden shrub now, which can be planted in pots as well as in borders. It is not a plant that likes its roots disturbed though, and likes morning sun, so care should be taken when planting.









Named after the Greek nymph Daphne, who was transformed into a laurel tree to escape the advances of Apollo, this plant has been cultivated in China since the Song Dynasty (960 – 1279), depicted in Japanese scrolls by 1309, and first introduced at Kew Gardens in 1771. Two of the Daphne species, Daphne bholua and Daphne papyracea, are grown for paper production (lokta paper), a traditional artisan product produced from the fibrous inner bark.

Now is the perfect time to be planting, so don't delay in choosing one from our fabulous selection. Edward and Hannah are sure you won't be disappointed!

“We aim to help students extend their knowledge and skills, through structured training using professionally qualified staff and volunteers”

This edition celebrates the positive result of this approach, by showing a series of photos from our recent Student Awards Ceremony. All our students are awarded their individual certificates, illustrating a significant skill and achievement in a particular field. These events are a special time to get together socially, and to enjoy our students’ successes.

So, with no further delay, here is a selection of photos of our students, and their awards! Congratulations to you all, you have all worked so hard to learn new skills, make new friends and make Horticap the place it is!



Michael was awarded the Alan Titchmarsh Award





































Nidd Green Hat Gardening



It is truly a pleasure to be providing Nidderdale High School with more plants for their project to improve their school grounds.

The grant awarded to the school from The Ernest Cook Trust, and the work it has enabled, has clearly captured the imagination and hearts of the students there, and their Autumn tasks have already started.

Their recent visit to Horticap was to use some of the grant money to buy 200 Horticap grown Primulas, that would replace the Begonias they planted in the summer. That is a lot of planting, and it was lovely to see the enthusiasm of the NGHG team when they came to collect them.



These quality Primulas have had a great start by being carefully planted by NGHG students, and the flower bed will be a riot of colour in no time. What a satisfying project to be working on, and Horticap is grateful to be benefitting too.



This project illustrates the power of community working together for the benefit of all. NGHG students are engaging in valuable learning, we are benefitting from welcome sales, and the general public will have the advantage of a beautifully enhanced environment in their local community.

Naturally, one of the most special things for us is to have these students visit us. Horticap students love welcoming visitors to the site and sharing their enthusiasm, and this visit was no exception. Heather Tuffs, their Outdoor Learning Tutor was complimentary about the visit too. “It was another very special trip to collect the plants, with our students mixing beautifully with the Horticap staff and students”. We look forward to receiving further updates and more productive collaboration!

The NGHG team are not the only ones busy with improving their site.



In order to offer new projects for our own students continued development, Chris and our students have been working to make the very best use of the space here; he is enthusiastic about growing produce for use in Hopkins, but it doesn’t stop there. He has a passion for experimenting with growing weird and wonderful fruit and vegetables!



Our fabulous kitchen garden is remaining, although visitors to the garden will see some attractive changes. This area has enabled our customers to gain knowledge about fruit and veg growing. Our students enjoy learning about it too, and often benefit from the results in the mess room!

The beds near the West Wing are being repurposed for an exciting new project, and the raised beds from there have been moved to a more sheltered spot. This has meant a lot of hard work for our students, and predictively, they have thrown themselves into the project with their usual positive attitude.





We are sure that our students will have a lot of fun growing some unusual produce, and hope that Chris will be sharing some ideas of what they can be used for too. We love an experiment!

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Out with the old and in with the new!



We are the proud owners of a new bespoke facility to replace our elderly 'yellow' greenhouse. This is a facility not open to the public, but is a valuable space for storing our nursery plants while we repot, prune and grow them on. Horticap students care for thousands of plants all year round, and this new addition was seen as essential to maintain the quality expected of us.



We are immensely grateful for the generosity of The Charles and Elsie Sykes Trust, npower Business Solutions, The Baily Thomas Charitable Fund and The Kirby Foundation, who awarded us grants for this project.









There is still lots to do, putting a concrete floor down and refurbishing the benches for the plants, but in the meantime, we have a fantastic, purpose-built new home for our plants!

The site took some clearing but both students and staff managed a great job, and much of the old glasshouse was repurposed or recycled. We were all excited come delivery day to see the new structure from Northern Polytunnels arrive, and were a little surprised to see a flat pack! However, the guys from TDH Construction knew exactly what they were doing, and in no time, it all took shape.

It's bigger than the old one which can only mean… more plants

Community Connections



Our students have yet again been out and about and contributing to the wider community. Amongst many jobs, we would particularly like to highlight two that our students have enjoyed being part of.

Firstly, Emma took her team of Stuart, Carl and Liam to St Michael's Hospice in Harrogate to provide plants for their garden. There is a lot of work going on there currently, and we are thrilled to have been a small part of it.







Secondly, those of you visiting Bettys at RHS Harlow Carr Gardens will see that not only has the inside been renovated, but that the outside has been spruced up too.

We were delighted to be asked to replant the planters and courtyard area, and despite the dismal weather, a good job was done by all.





Josh, James, Victoria, Hannah and Carl worked so hard!





Garden Hints and Tips for the winter - Prevention, Planning and Positivity!

As the year draws to a close, gardening naturally becomes an ‘if and when’ activity, but there are jobs that can be done to prepare your plants for the winter ahead. These tasks can be seen in action on our own nursery, so have a look around our garden and greenhouses on your next visit. You might just pick up a tip, but here are a few ideas which we hope are useful during December, January and February.







Prevention

Check that you have everything to hand for when the weather gets cold with fleece, straw and bubble wrap being perfect for covering pots and more delicate plants. Move pots and planters to a more sheltered position, and group together to give better protection, with the fleece wrapped around the pots to prevent the roots freezing.

Mulch flower beds to keep the freezing temperatures from damaging plants, and keep spring flowering plants such as Camelias and Magnolias away from being exposed to early morning winter sunshine. This will help to prevent rapid thawing of the early formed flower buds, which can result in the buds falling off or the flowers being spoiled.

Planning

The new year brings the emergence of Snow Drops and a recognition that the garden is starting to come alive again. It is a good time to prune Apple and Pear trees by taking out dead, diseased, damaged or dying wood to stimulate new growth, and allow more light and air to the tree. Generally speaking, established trees need pruning every two or three years, whilst young trees need shaping for the first three to four years.

It is also a great time to plan for the coming year. Will you need to move anything, are there any gaps and has the use of your garden changed? Whilst there is no influence from summer flowers and fruit and vegetable growing, it is a wonderful time to re-evaluate how you want the garden to look and be used for. Make a note of your ideas so you do not forget!

Positivity

Positivity is the name of the game in February for many of us! The long cold, dark days can be very lowering, but there is much that nature can give us to cheer our days.



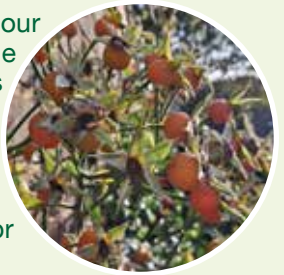
The Snowdrops are joined by other early bulbs such as Narcissi, Muscari, Winter Aconite, Crocus and Scilla which bring a welcome cheery look to focus on.

Early fragrant winter shrubs come into their own, offering a beautiful structural display, particularly when covered in sparkly frost or snow. Our greenhouse is full of these plants and now is the perfect time to plant them. Perfect examples are Witch Hazel, Sarcococca, Mahonia, Viburnum and Daphne.



Our featured winter flowering Daphne is one of our most popular plants with customers, along with Skimmia and Cyclamen. Who could resist any of them…Victoria definitely can’t!

There are also lots of other ways our garden can give pleasure through the winter months. Some Rose varieties produce Rose hips, the berry like fruit that appears after flowering, as long as the flowers are left. They add both colour and structure, and are a welcome food source for birds too.







Build a bug hotel. We have some really splendid ones in our nature trail, but they can be very simple. The one shown on the left has been made in a repurposed bird table. Lots of different materials were used to offer many environments for bugs, and in this case, a Wren!

The winter brings lots of migratory birds to our gardens, such as Redwing, Fieldfares and if we’re very lucky, Waxwings. They feed largely on the berries in hedges and shrubs and other fruits in our hedgerows, and can be tempted into the garden with seeds and fat balls. These are also ideal for garden birds, so stock up from our shop.

We have a fantastic range, along with feeders, and all priced up and displayed by our students!

Easy fixes for the winter garden



If you are feeling that your garden needs a little help to see it through the winter, here are a couple of ideas that are easy to do now, and will give you a welcome reward right into the spring!



Fill lots of pots with selections of spring flowering bulbs and put them in spots where they can be seen easily. They need no care after planting and offer so much cheeriness and optimism when they first pop through, and what can be nicer than to pick a few for inside the house too?



Our next suggestion is to plant a selection of grasses into planters and pots. Like bulbs, they largely look after themselves once planted, but visually give so much to a garden at any time of the year. They look amazing when the frost catches them, tolerate snow weighing them down and give winter shelter for many garden residents. Just imagine all those dew-covered cobwebs on the grasses, and glistening in the winter sunshine - stunning!

It was with this in mind that Scott and Victoria set to, gathering some of our grasses from the greenhouse and planting these planters up. What a brilliant job too, they look great!





Student Focus – Timothy



Next January, Timothy will have been with us for 42 years! He has certainly seen some changes to the work, facilities, staff and volunteers, and other students over this time, but his development, enthusiasm and consistency with his own work have never waned.

In common with some of our more long-standing students, Timothy now attends part-time and spends more time at home with Tricia, his carer, with whom he has lived for a long time.



One of the brighter times for us following lock down, when students were still unable to attend Horticap, was the regular visits that Timothy and Tricia did to see us. It was not only a delight for us to see him looking so well, but valuable for him to see his work place was still there and waiting for him.



Timothy was very proud to be chosen to be interviewed by Amanda Harper from BBC Look North, as part of our 40th Anniversary year. He managed really well in what could have been an intimidating situation, and we were all very proud to watch him that evening on the television.







Timothy is such a wonderful person to be around. He is very industrious and likes to do the job properly. He is a kind and nurturing person for newer students, and is himself respected enormously by both staff and students.

Oh, and he loves scones!



GENERAL OPENING TIMES

HORTICAP SHOP & NURSERY

T: 01423 522 876 (option 3)

MONDAY to SATURDAY 9am to 5pm

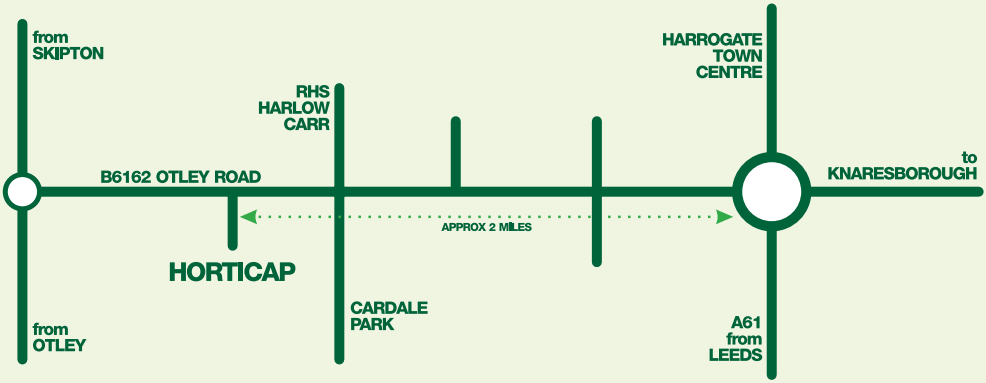
& SUNDAYS 10am to 4pm

HOPKINS CAFE

T: 01423 522 876 (option 2)

MONDAY to SATURDAY 9.30am to 4.30pm (Last Orders 4pm)

& SUNDAYS 10am to 4pm (Last Orders 3.30pm)



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