



HARROGATE

IN BLOOM

2025



Harrogate's floral excellence has been renowned for decades and has truly put Harrogate on the map.

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Introduction

We, at Harrogate in Bloom, are honoured to be invited to represent Yorkshire in Bloom in the RHS Britain in Bloom Competition 2025.

The economy of the town is based not only on Conference and Exhibition business but largely on tourism, which is totally dependent on 'in bloom' for attraction.

Harrogate is a wonderful town in which to live, work and bring up our families. The horticultural, environmental and community organisations provide the flower power, fresh air and conviviality to share with everybody who comes to stay here. Hence our reputation as 'the floral town of the North of England'.

Through our portfolio, we want to show you just how much work is done throughout the year to sustain this position.

Pam Grant, President of Harrogate in Bloom

Our In Bloom Journey

Harrogate in Bloom is an independent organisation promoting and improving the floral image and beauty of Harrogate. We are a group of volunteers formed in 1989, in order to support North Yorkshire Council in maintaining the town's reputation for horticultural excellence.

Founder members still in the group are Pam Grant, President, and Chris Beard, Treasurer and Horticultural Expert. Chris is our Harrogate in Bloom Superstar!

When the "In Bloom" criteria evolved to place more emphasis on the environment and community involvement, we needed to evolve. In 2015 Harrogate in Bloom made a conscious effort to bring together like-minded community groups and named the group 'Team Harrogate'. In 2022 we found that other organisations were using the name 'Team Harrogate' and as we are now an established organisation including community groups, the Harrogate BID, the Harrogate Chamber of Commerce and North Yorkshire Council, we decided to revert back to the original name of 'Harrogate in Bloom'.

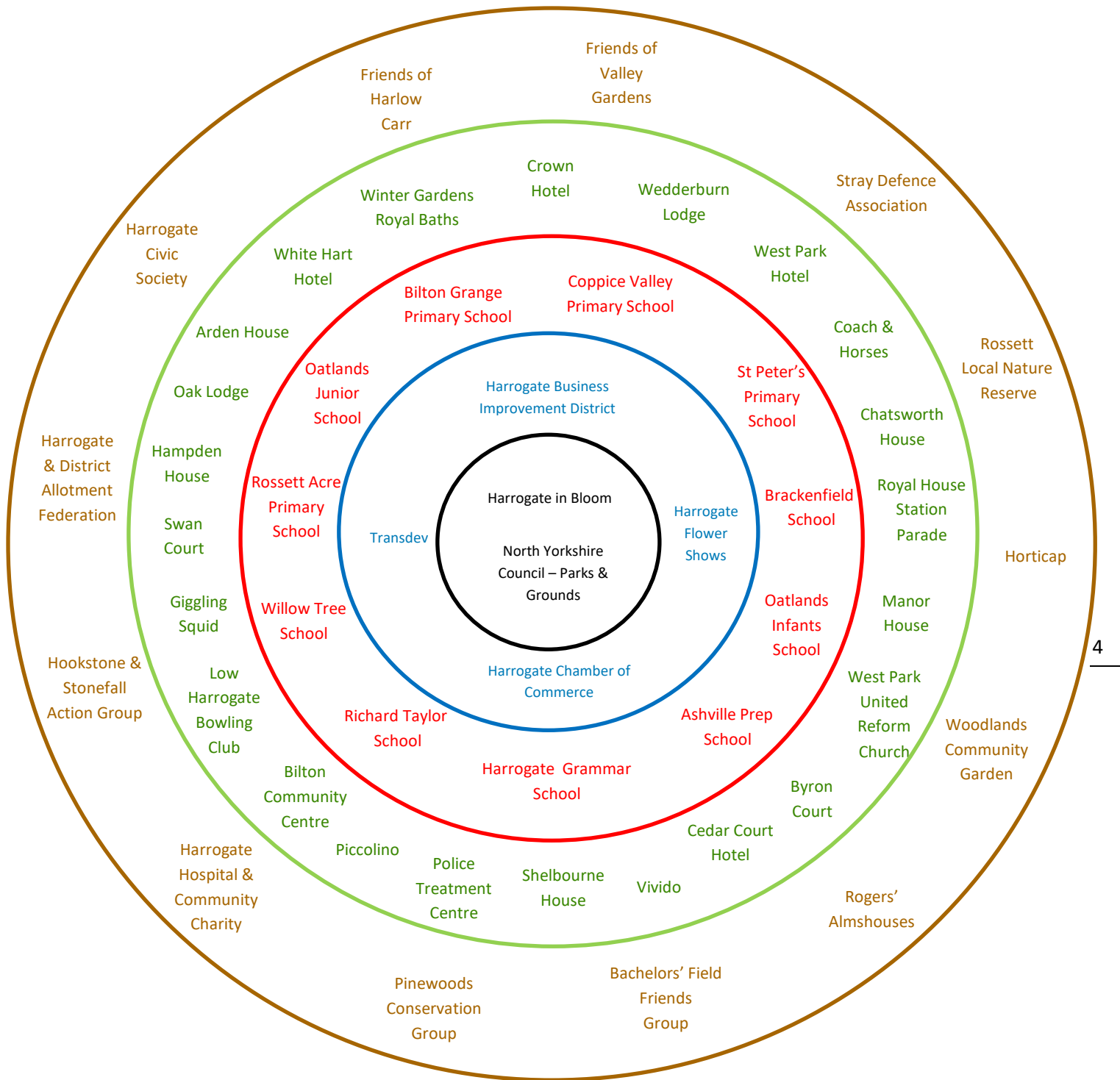
Since 2015, we have held regular meetings to share information on how each group is working to enhance our environment, to exchange ideas and to provide support for each other. In 2020 we invited the Harrogate Business Improvement District to our first meeting after Covid. It was a breath of fresh air to meet Matthew and his team who revived our 'in bloom' enthusiasm and brought us to where we are today. We are now a well-integrated group working closely together to make Harrogate blooming lovely.

Our series of annual Harrogate in Bloom competitions encourages a wide range of entries from businesses, schools and residential organisations therefore involving a cross-section of the local community. We understand the value of horticulture and the environment to all age groups. In 2025, we have increased our involvement with local schools many of which already do a great job in teaching their students the importance of the environment and the benefits that can be gained from working outdoors.

We are immensely proud of our In Bloom record and particular highlights include twice winning Europe in Bloom, gaining special awards for tourism and having the RHS Britain in Bloom judges award their discretionary Best Public Park to the town's Valley Gardens.



Harrogate in Bloom Community



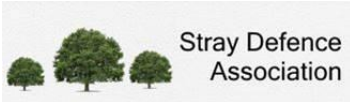
- Community Groups
- Competition Entrants
- Schools
- Key Organisations
- Central Organisation

Meet our Harrogate in Bloom Community Groups



	Harrogate in Bloom brings together a number of community groups, which are all working to make our town a wonderful place to live, work and play. Our mission is to maintain and improve the horticultural and environmental aspects of our town. Committee – 25 members
	North Yorkshire Council carries out most of the planting in the public spaces in Harrogate. Liz Bailey, NYC's Community Engagement Officer is a key member of the Harrogate in Bloom Committee. Frances Adamson and Shirelle Hawkins, NYC Parks & Grounds Countryside Officers work with several community groups to improve and enhance the local environment.
	Harrogate BID's vision is to maximise Harrogate's potential as a destination through embracing its heritage, including its floral heritage. Harrogate BID achieved Gold in the 2023 Britain in Bloom finals and Gold in the 2024 Yorkshire in Bloom finals.
	The North of England Horticultural Society stages the prestigious twice-yearly Harrogate Flower Show. Nick Smith, Show Director, is a key member of Harrogate in Bloom supporting many of the activities of the other Harrogate in Bloom groups.
	Harrogate District Chamber of Commerce is the one of the largest business organisations in the Harrogate area, representing businesses in all sectors and of all sizes. Harrogate District Chamber of Commerce works closely with Harrogate BID and is an active supporter of Harrogate in Bloom's annual competitions.

 HARROGATE Civic Society	Harrogate Civic Society is committed to celebrating the town's architectural and social history, to contributing to discussions about how the town is developed, and to ensuring that Harrogate both retains the best of its historic character and embraces the future. Volunteers: 24 committee and sub-committee members
	The Harrogate & District Allotment Federation brings together the allotment sites across the district to share ideas and good practice and to showcase their gardening successes at the annual Allotment Show. Volunteers: HDAF Show committee 16 members 7 Harrogate self-managed allotments have approx. 45 committee members.
	Hookstone Wood and Stonefall and Panhandle Park are areas owned by North Yorkshire Council and the Hookstone and Stonefall Action Group volunteers carry out maintenance work under the guidance and supervision of the council's Countryside Officer. Volunteers: 8 active members, 2 NYC employees, 5 occasional and 88 people on the contact list.
	Horticap is an independent, registered charity with qualified staff and a team of volunteers who provide adults with learning and other disabilities training in horticulture, allied crafts and rural skills. Horticap also aims to build, maintain and grow a beautiful garden for members of the public of all ages to enjoy which includes a wildlife and bird spotting area, as well as beautiful flowers, plants, trees and shrubs. Students : 60 (approx. 25 per day) Volunteers: 30 volunteers plus 5 volunteer trustees
	The Pinewoods Conservation Group aim to promote the maintenance and conservation of the environment within the Pinewoods - approximately 96 acres of semi-natural woodland, one kilometre south-west of Harrogate town centre. Volunteers: approx. 20 regular volunteers
 Friends of VALLEY GARDENS	Friends of Valley Gardens are a group of volunteers who work with North Yorkshire Council to restore, maintain and enhance Harrogate's beautiful Valley Gardens for the benefit of residents and visitors. Volunteers: Committee/ Trustees - 3; Volunteer gardeners - 19 Magnesia Well volunteers - 8
 ROSSETT LOCAL NATURE RESERVE	Rossett Local Nature Reserve is a small urban nature reserve. There are several small ponds, along with some scrub and some grassland. It is a site of special scientific interest and now has Nature Reserve status from Natural England due to a breeding colony of Great Crested Newts. Volunteers: 7

	The Friends of Harlow Carr organise general interest tours for visiting groups throughout the season and weekly garden walks in May and June, giving a fascinating insight into the main features and history of Harlow Carr. They also lead exclusive special interest visits to the Woodland, Alpine House and the Bramall Learning Centre. Volunteer gardeners work with permanent staff to keep the gardens looking wonderful. Volunteers: 97 including tour guides, gardeners and library volunteers.
	Since 12th May 1933 the Stray Defence Association has been safeguarding Harrogate's Stray against building and encroachment and upholding the Act granting freedom of the Stray to all people for all time. Volunteers: Committee – 6 members
	Woodlands Community Garden can be found behind the Woodlands Methodist Church on Wetherby Road, Harrogate. In 2013, it was a large, grassed space, which has been turned into a community garden for local residents and community groups to enjoy. Volunteers: 10
	The Bachelor's Field Friends Group was set up over 20 years ago to look after Bachelor's Field, which is an open space for all to enjoy - wildlife as well as the local community. The BFFG group meet throughout the year to maintain the field, with pond clearance, tidying of edges of the copses and paths. Volunteers: 15
	Harrogate District Hospital has some 27 internal courtyards of varying sizes, and a large area of tree and shrub covered estate around the hospital. Much of the estate borders the Stray and benefits from the trees and open aspect. Harrogate Hospital & Community Charity, the Hospital charity, works to improve the happiness and wellbeing of staff and patients.
	The 15 Rogers' Almshouses are situated in the heart of Harrogate on Belford Road. The original Almshouses face into a picturesque front garden, catching the sun throughout most of the day and providing a pleasant setting for neighbours to sit and chat.



Our Harrogate in Bloom Superstar

Our Super Star is **Chris Beard**.

Chris's first encounter with "In Bloom" was in 1969 when he was working for Cardiff City Council and escorted the Britain in Bloom judges around the city.

Chris moved to work for Harrogate Parks in 1974 and from 1975 co-ordinated and supported the In Bloom entries in the Harrogate District as part of his role (19 communities in total). From 1975 until the present day, Chris has escorted regional and national judges around local entries. Harrogate's success in In Bloom competitions over the years is in no small part due to Chris's hard work.

In 1989, whilst Head of Parks for Harrogate Borough Council, Chris founded Harrogate in Bloom with our president, Pam Grant. He has been our treasurer and a stalwart and a mainstay of our committee ever since. He has created competitions for schools, businesses and individuals to enhance the floral environment of the town and he regularly judges these competitions. Chris has also been a judge for Yorkshire in Bloom and at the Harrogate Flower Shows and has been on the Council of the RHS. His vast gardening knowledge is invaluable.

In 2015, Chris helped to set up Hookstone and Stonefall Action Group (HASAG) whose aim is to enhance the ancient Hookstone Woods and Stonefall Park (a former tip) for the benefit of local residents. Members of the group have improved the pathways, planted wildflowers, introduced information boards, carried out ecological surveys, tree surveys, an annual birdwatch and regular litter picks. Chris has been a driving force for many of these projects. HASAG has entered "It's Your Neighbourhood" and has achieved the highest grading.

Chris volunteers at RHS Harlow Carr Garden as a garden guide. He is also treasurer of the Friends of Harlow Carr. The Friends have raised £55k over 23 years to enhance the garden. The Friends are one of Harrogate in Bloom's member organisations.

Chris has also opened his own garden to raise funds for St Michael's Hospice, the Red Cross and Harlow Carr.

At 86, Chris is still an active member of our group who brings a wealth of experience and knowledge.



Sue Wood receives the 2025 RHS Harlow Carr Medal



The prestigious 2025 Harlow Carr Medal has been awarded to Sue Wood. This lifetime achievement award honours those who have significantly contributed to horticulture in the North of England through their service, commitment to projects, unique capabilities, reliability, and professionalism.

Sue Wood is a dedicated horticulturist, and plantswoman whose work has shaped some of the most notable parks and gardens in the North of England. Her stunning floral displays in Harrogate and surrounding areas skilfully balance tradition with innovation. Sue has introduced pollinator-friendly planting and sustainable landscaping, ensuring her designs are both beautiful and environmentally responsible.

A passionate advocate for horticultural education and community engagement, Sue has played a key role in initiatives such as Yorkshire in Bloom, the RHS Windlesham Trophy, and numerous plant trials at RHS Garden Harlow Carr in North Yorkshire and RHS Garden Bridgewater in Greater Manchester. Her expertise and commitment have not only enhanced the beauty of public spaces but also enriched the lives of residents and visitors, fostering a greater appreciation for horticulture within her community.

Diary of Events August 2024 – August 2025

Month	Date	Event
Aug 2024	18 th	Harrogate & District Allotment Federation 63 rd Annual Show
Sept 2024	6 th	Harrogate in Bloom Committee meeting
	7 th	Unity Grove Allotments Open Day
	19 th	Harrogate in Bloom Awards evening
Oct 2024	4 th	Harrogate in Bloom Committee meeting
Nov 2024	8 th	Harrogate in Bloom Committee meeting
Jan 2025	23 rd	Harrogate & District Allotment Federation AGM
		Children's Art Competition launched
Feb 2025	7 th	Harrogate in Bloom Committee meeting
Mar 2025	7 th	Harrogate in Bloom Committee meeting
	18 th	Friends of RHS Harlow Carr AGM
	26 th	Friends of Valley Gardens AGM
	26 th	Harrogate & District Allotment Federation Site Chairs' meeting
Apr 2025		Harrogate in Bloom Competition & School Garden Award launched
	4 th	Harrogate in Bloom Committee meeting
	24 th – 27 th	Harrogate Spring Flower Show
	30 th	Pinewoods Conservation Group AGM
May 2025	1 st	Harrogate in Bloom Committee meeting
Jun 2025	13 th	Deadline for Children's Art Competition
	14 th	Harlow Hill Allotments Open Day
	20 th	Deadline for Harrogate in Bloom School Garden Awards
	22 nd	Oatlands Allotments Open Day
	26 th	Harrogate & District Allotment Federation – Harrogate site judging
	27 th	Harrogate & District Allotment Federation – Harrogate site judging
	29 th	Deadline for Harrogate in Bloom Competitions
Jul 2025	18 th	Launch of Harrogate BID's Floral Summer of Celebration
	27 th	Pine Street Allotments Open Day
Aug 2025	10 th	Bachelor's Field Friends Group – Pop-up event
	17 th	Harrogate & District Allotment Federation 64 th Annual Show

Regular events

Community Group	Events
Friends of Valley Gardens	Weekly gardening groups
	Old Magnesia Well open twice a month
Pinewoods Conservation Group	Monthly litter pick
Bachelor's Field Friends Group	Bimonthly work parties at the weekend
Rossett Local Nature Reserve	Bimonthly meetings and 2-3 work parties per year
Woodlands Community Garden	Weekly Wednesday gardening morning.



Our Achievements

a) Horticultural Achievements

North Yorkshire Council carries out most of the planting in the public spaces in Harrogate including formal gardens and planted areas such as the Valley Gardens, Montpellier Hill, West Park, Library Gardens as well as some roundabouts, such as Prince of Wales roundabout and The Crown roundabout.

- The planting consists of traditional bedding schemes, sustainable permanent planting, pollinator-friendly and wildflower areas. The type of planting depends on the location and maintenance required.
- Where weeds are causing a safety hazard, NYC use one application of glyphosate. NYC is committed to reducing the usage of weedkillers and have vastly reduced what is used in Harrogate by about 50%



NYC's Horticultural Nursery at Harlow Hill, grows over 400,000 bedding plants each year, which are planted by the parks team in floral displays across the district, including the subsidised hanging basket scheme.

- The nursery has grown 15,000 perennial plants this year for planting out and also selling in the nursery shop, 98% of them being bee-friendly. There has been a big move to sell more pollinator friendly perennial plants at the nursery shop too rather than just bedding plants.
 - The nursery offers up to 130 subsidised hanging baskets to Harrogate centre businesses – this includes growing, planting, watering (adding water-storing granules and feed), putting up and taking down the hanging baskets
- The nursery currently uses peat-reduced compost. An initial trial of peat-free proved unsatisfactory, but they plan to try again as the peat-free composts improve. Only peat-free compost is sold to the public.

NYC is responsible for maintaining and cutting the 200 acres of Harrogate Stray parkland along with other parks and open spaces such as Stonefall Park.

- NYC's grass cutting policy is structured to manage the different requirements in both urban and rural environments.
- They aim to balance the safety of road users and pedestrians with environmental considerations, recognising that verges are important for wildlife.
- Some of the grass cutting is done early in the year, and some in July, August or September, to allow flowers to set seed whilst also maintaining safety.



NYC also manages trees on highways and in parks and woodland such as **Hookstone Woods and the Pinewoods**, including a programme of annual tree planting.

- NYC has a policy of planting 2 trees for every one lost. 200 trees have been planted in the Harrogate area, linking with White Rose Forest and The Northern Forest. Native trees are planted in woodlands, but in urban areas, trees that can cope with a drier climate and urban heat, such as Tulip Tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) and Liquid Amber (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), are planted.
- Due to the warmer climate hydration bags are being used on some young trees and the results monitored for the future. NYC had an initial trial of 100 hydration bags, each containing 70 litres of water which releases gradually over a few days. Further to this trial, a further 100 bags for young trees are being used, whilst also checking stakes and ties, using mulch circles which help to retain moisture and suppress weeds and with some formative pruning where necessary.



NYC's parks team has recently planted 300 scented roses, with climbing roses around the base of the gazebo in the Valley Gardens.

- The climbing varieties are Compassion, Madame Alfred Carrier and Alfresco. Next to them is a carpet rose called Sweet Child of Mine and in the teardrop shapes there are Charles de Mills, Buff Beauty, Felcia and Roseraie De L'Hay which are all bush roses.
- The grass around rose beds will be mowed to show off the rose beds and encourage the public to walk around and to fully enjoy the blooms in the autumn. It is planned to extend the rose garden next winter.

- A huge thank you goes to the **Friends Of Valley Gardens Harrogate** who made a large contribution towards the cost of gazebo.

Friends of Valley Gardens volunteer gardeners now meet weekly to help maintain the gardens' diverse flora - both native and non-native plants. In 2025, they are working to restore the rockery near the Old Magnesia Well Pump Room.



The famous **dahlia bed in the Valley Gardens** was planted with even more different varieties in 2024 and has been replanted for 2025.

Harrogate BID funds 200 additional floral displays to add to the floral offering in the town, which include barrier baskets that are provided by North Yorkshire Council and are replaced twice each year in time for Summer and Autumn.

The BID's fourth Annual **Floral Summer of Celebration** will be launched on 18th July.



Our eight Harrogate Allotment sites are well-used and well-maintained.

- A wide range of vegetables, fruit and flowers can be found on all our sites.
- Plot holders are encouraged to grow plants to encourage pollinators and find environmentally friendly ways to deal with pests and weeds.
- Volunteers keep the grass rides mown, the hedges cut and keep the sites tidy.
- Most of the sites have hedges along part of their boundaries and hedge-cutting is always delayed until birds have fledged.

The arrival of the **cherry blossom** has been enjoyed ever since 100 double-flowering cherry trees were planted along two avenues across **the Stray** to mark Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953.

- Hundreds of visitors of many nationalities come to Harrogate each year to enjoy a stroll beneath the cherry trees, to take photographs and appreciate their beauty.
- Harrogate is now considered to be one of the UK's cherry blossom hotspots. In 2025 the BBC had a feature article on our "Sakura" season.



Horticulture at Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery Harrogate Stonefall

There are just over 1000 First and Second World War Graves at Harrogate Stonefall Cemetery. Where ten or more graves sit together, the group becomes a garden plot. The idea was to provide a place for reflection and remembrance for those left behind and that the casualties would rest in a garden of England. At Harrogate there are seven different repeated schemes stretching continuously across both sides of the central path. The pattern, within each scheme is repeated every four headstones.

- In front of the headstones low growing plants are used to avoid obscuring the inscription at the foot of the stone.
- Plants are also selected for their spreading habit as this prevents soil splash damaging or staining the stone and making it illegible. In the gaps between stones, every other plant is called the principal plant, and this is a rose in most cases.
- Perennials are usually used in the gaps alternating with roses and these also follow a repeated pattern.
- As Harrogate is a particularly large site it also has several back border plantings where the area behind a row of graves is also planted. Shrubs along with herbaceous perennials are used in these areas which help to provide winter structure and interest and create height which softens the aesthetics of the site.
- Turf has traditionally been managed very formally but with an ever more sustainable approach there are subtle changes to practice. These include increasing cutting heights, reducing cutting frequency, accepting some non-grass species within the turf, rewilding areas and the reduction and phasing out the use of chemicals.
- Harrogate CWGC site also benefits from border planting on the boundary with the civic plot. The border design for the top half was designed in the style of Piet Oudolf by Area Manager Stephen Liversage. The lower half is more naturalist dry shade planting to compliment and was designed by Helen Gregory in collaboration with head gardener Tim Lambert and senior gardener Nick Holden. There is also an acid border near the access to the yard.
- Sustainability and environmental improvements have been a real focus in the last 4 years introducing a wildflower area, use of natural predators, bug hotels, bird, bat and hedgehog houses. A rainwater collection tank has been installed, and natural plant feeds trialled such as worm cast composts, worm tea and traditional rose mulches.



As a tourist town with a reputation for floral beauty, we aim to have our town looking wonderful with horticultural attractions all year round



b) Environmental Responsibility

The Harrogate Business Improvement District has two street rangers who rapidly respond to cleaning and maintenance issues.

- Regular deep cleans carried out by the BID also ensure that our streets are presented at their original best.



- A recent Pride in our Town initiative has seen a local artist, Sarah Marsh, facilitated by Harrogate BID, use fantastic floral artwork to brighten up a series of utility boxes in a prime town centre location.

The Pinewood Conservation Group promotes the maintenance and conservation of the environment within the Pinewoods.

- Regular volunteering groups refill bird feeders and regularly litter pick.
- The group holds regular monthly volunteering days on 1st Sunday of the month, with increasing numbers helping out.
- Volunteers and professionals continue to remove Himalayan balsam.
- Rhododendrons are cleared in agreement with North Yorkshire Council
- Several visiting groups and businesses including NHS, Fit Harrogate and Army Foundation College have helped out.



In 2024, Save Rotary Wood and the Pinewoods Conservation Group commissioned a bat assessment at Rotary Wood.

- A minimum of seven bat species were confirmed (Whiskered, Brandt’s, Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Noctule, Brown Long-eared and Natterer’s.
- Daubenton’s bat are also likely to utilise the wood.
- The survey involved a series of Night-time Bat Walkover (NBW) and Automated Bat Detector surveys (ABD) being undertaken across the 2024 active season.

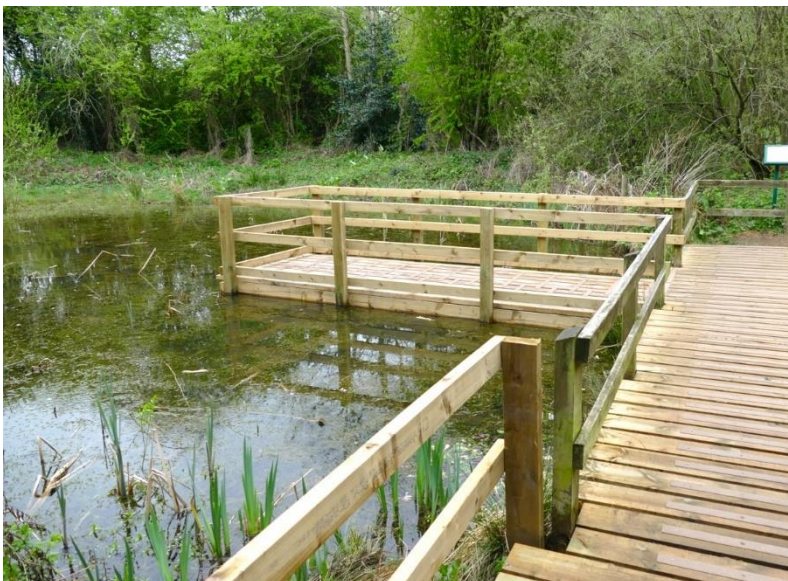
Month	Average bats/night
May	235.9
June	219.6
July	404
August	60.2

Rossett Local Nature Reserve is a small urban nature reserve located off a 400-metre-long section of Rossett Drive, adjoining Richmond Avenue. There are several small ponds, along with some scrub and some grassland. It is a site of special scientific interest and now also has Nature Reserve status from Natural England, due to a breeding colony of Great Crested Newts.

- **The Friends of Rossett Local Nature Reserve** look after the area, organising volunteer days for litter picking.
- Children from **Rossett Acre Primary School**, adjacent to the Nature Reserve, produced posters to encourage dog walkers not to allow their dogs to foul the area.



In conjunction with the **Friends of Rossett Local Nature Reserve**, **NYC Parks & Grounds Countryside team** has secured funding and recently upgraded the dipping platform and boardwalk at Rossett Local Nature Reserve.



- The main platform has been replaced with none slip boards and new fencing, with a new platform created to the side to allow clearer views into the pond.
- The dipping platform will allow easy access for educational pond dipping sessions with local schools and the local community, and to conduct annual surveys to monitor the population of great crested newts and aquatic invertebrates in the ponds.

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- The Friends meet 2-3 times a year to do habitat management, such as cutting back vegetation around the ponds to prevent them being overshadowed too much and to create a better environment for the great crested newts which prefer warmer ponds where the sunlight reaches the surface.
- This year, the group is fundraising to replace the fencing along the cycle path with more secure metal fencing to stop access and to make the hedgerow habitat safer and better for the newts.
- There is also a very big willow tree and a lot of small trees surrounding two of the ponds. In winter, these will be removed and cut up and piled as habitat next to the ponds, and also the two remaining ponds will be dug out to remove the crassula which would form a blanket so thick it could deprive the pond of oxygen and also block out sunlight which is harmful for all the wildlife in the ponds.
- Surveys are carried out in spring. This involves hand netting to record and monitor the number of newts, efts, eggs and stickleback. Volunteers are also trained to do Great Crested Newt surveys. The plan is to eventually get more people in the group with a licence who are able to carry out surveys and supervise pond dipping sessions.

NYC Parks & Grounds Countryside Officers have recently been doing some pond improvement works at **Willow Woods in Bilton**.

- The pond has been made significantly bigger with new fencing going in.
- There are plans to improve the public right of way that runs alongside the ponds.

This work was carried out in collaboration with the **Yorkshire Wildlife Trust** who is partnering with **Natural England** to create and restore ponds in selected parts of North and West

Yorkshire for the conservation of Great Crested Newts. The ponds are being created to compensate for the environmental impacts of development and will help to strengthen or expand existing Great Crested Newt populations and create new habitat for other wetland wildlife. It is expected that newts and other wildlife will colonise the ponds naturally.



NYC's Parks & Grounds Countryside Officers worked closely with **Hookstone & Stonefall Action Group (HASAG)** to organise refurbishment works at Hookstone Woods. The old fencing has been removed and the revetment around the willow bridge path replaced.

- Members of HASAG planted ivy around the newly re-furbished bridge.
- HASAG members regularly carry out litter picking in the woods.



Hookstone Wood is an ancient wood. In 2024 HASAG came across someone who had done a vegetation and bird survey in 1965 and the group asked him to revisit the wood and give an update. His initial report (60 years on) is fascinating and the changes he has noted are quite revealing, with his promise that he will continue his survey. He recommends that no major works are required or desirable and just to carry out minor maintenance work, litter picking, balsam control etc.

Bachelor's Field

- In April 2025, Shirelle, NYC Parks and Grounds Countryside Officer, and a working party from Open Country did a great job of cutting back some of the blackthorn and widening the path at **Bachelor's Field**. Open Country will be asked to return later in the year to do more path clearing and push more of the blackthorn back.
- The **Bachelor's Field Friends Group** is working with NYC and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to look at the possibility of deepening the pond in the field with an aim to attract Great Crested Newts.



On our allotment sites:

- Plot holders with sheds are encouraged to have water butts to collect water. On Pine Street allotments, it is not uncommon to see three or more water butts next to each shed.
- Living roofs are starting to appear on some sheds too.
- Pollinator- friendly plants are frequently seen and plot holders will grow phacelia or allow brassicas to run to seed to provide food for pollinators when there are not many other flowering plants around.
- Harlow Hill Allotments only stocks peat-free compost in their allotment shop and has banned weed killers for the last few years.
- Several of our sites have beehives.
- Small ponds and bug hotels can be found on many plots too. Harlow Hill Allotments have a wildlife area with a pond, trees, bird box and bat box.



Chestnut Click Beetle at Birk Cragg

Almost 100 years ago the click beetle could be found as far apart as South Wales and the Durham coast. However, only two populations of this beetle were recorded in the 1980s on the south coast of the Isle of Wight and at Birk Crag in Harrogate.

- Work is currently being planned to improve beetle habitat at Birk Crag and to find out what invertebrates are currently living there.
- Click beetle posters are up and one of **NYC's Parks & Grounds Countryside Officers** has done 3 visits to look for them but has not found them yet.
- NYC has commissioned an ecological survey on Birk Crag and an action plan will be drawn up following that.
- Later in this year after bird nesting season NYC will start the process of tackling the rhododendrons and holly on site that and very soon the countryside officers will start to deal with the Himalayan balsam which has also spread.



Celebrating our Heritage

Harrogate Civic Society is committed to celebrating the town's architectural and social history, to contributing to discussions about how the town is developed, and to ensuring that Harrogate both retains the best of its historic character and embraces the future.

- The 94 Brown Heritage plaques around the town tell a history of Harrogate, through its Spa heritage and the people and buildings associated with that history.
- Several new plaques are due to be unveiled in 2025 - to Mary Fisher MBE, first female Mayor of Harrogate, to Claude Verity, inventor of talking movies, and for the Sun Pavilion in the Valley Gardens.
- Walking trails enable residents and visitors to find the plaques and learn more about the history of the town. The trails are available on leaflets and on a mobile phone app with interactive maps.



In 2024 an opportunity arose to restore the lanterns at the entrance to Valley Gardens using new more efficient and sustainable LED lights. These are in a traditional lantern style, replacing the broken ones on top of the pillars, thus enhancing the streetscape in that area.

The lights were funded by a bequest following the death of Mike Hind, a longstanding member of **Harrogate Civic Society**. The **Friends of Valley Gardens and HCS** considered the new lanterns to be a fitting tribute to Mike's memory .



Friends of Valley Gardens volunteers open the **Old Magnesia Well Pump Room** on the 1st & 3rd Sunday in the month from 10.30am to 2.30pm providing visitors with an insight into Harrogate's Spa History.



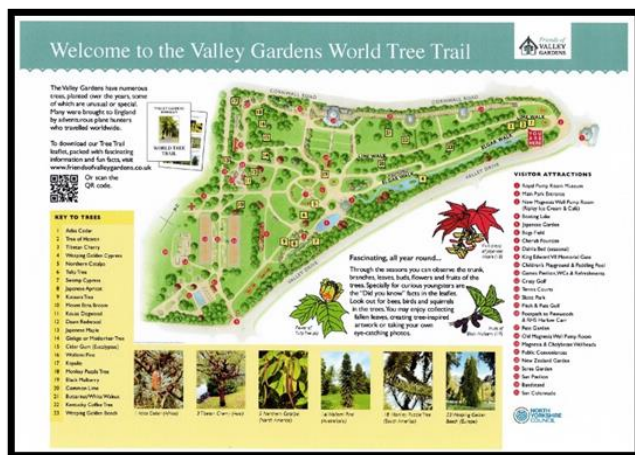
c) Community Participation

- Harrogate in Bloom has a comprehensive website www.harrogateinbloom.org.uk and has social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, X and Blue Sky to highlight our activities.
- Harrogate in Bloom also has a noticeboard in the Valley Gardens to advertise events and showcase information.
- Harrogate in Bloom had a stall at the Harrogate Spring Flower Show to raise funds by selling cards depicting floral aspects of Harrogate and to promote our role.



Several of our groups use information boards to provide interest and education.

Friends of Valley Gardens (FOVG) produced a World Tree Trail for children and adults describing some of the unusual and fascinating trees in the Valley Gardens to "take a trip around the world".



- FOVG worked in partnership with North Yorkshire Council and local suppliers and tradesmen.
- The tree trail guide was produced on the web for use online, including usage on mobile phones and also as a hard copy booklet with an information board/lectern on site.
- It includes all the seasons of the year and interesting points about the trees to look for all year round.

It has proven to be very successful with many positive comments received. The booklet has proven to be extremely popular such that those in the initial batch of 1000 were distributed in less than a year. A second edition matching the latest online version was reprinted in another batch of 1000. It has been reported that the printed version is liked by children and teaches them not only about trees but the continents of the world.

At **Rossett Local Nature Reserve**, attractive information boards highlight the wildlife that can be seen.



Horticap has many interesting and information boards around the garden and the Nature Trail to interest visitors of all ages.



The **Stray Defence Association** moved and transformed a ramshackle red phone box in 2023.

It now gives a detailed history of the Stray to inform visitors.

The sensory bed at **Spenceley Gardens** in Harrogate town centre was originally created in 1973 when the land was gifted to Harrogate Borough Council by Alderman Spenceley.

- Staff and students from RHS Harlow Carr redesigned and planted the garden with grasses and herbs to create a sensory area.
- The Vision Support pottery class designed a new sign for the garden, along with the original braille plaques to help visually impaired visitors identify the various plants.



Panhandle Park has an informative noticeboard to outline the key features of the park.

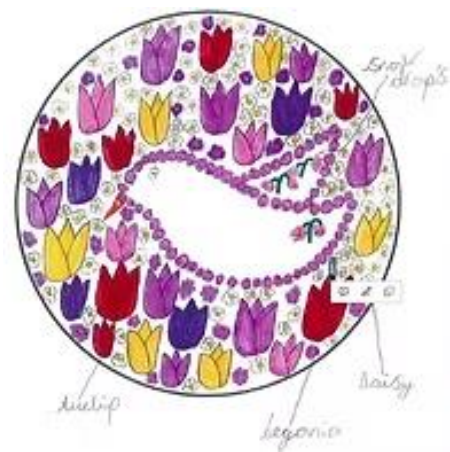
Harrogate in Bloom Competitions

Throughout the year we run a number of competitions to recognise endeavour and to encourage more involvement.

Children's Art Competition

The first competition of the year is always for children.

- The theme of our 2025 Children's Art competition is '**250 Years of the USA**'. Children between the ages of seven and eleven years are challenged to design a flower bed on this theme, which will be planted in 2026, on the circular bed near the main entrance of the Valley Gardens.
- Information folders were delivered to **8** schools in January with a deadline for submission at the end of June.
- In 2024, the theme of the competition was 'Peace, 8 schools entered, which was three more previously. The winning design was by **Tabitha Dalglish**, aged 7, from St Peter's School. The bed was planted at the start of June 2025.
- Tabitha suggested Spring flowers for her design, but as summer bedding plants was needed, the gardeners chose summer plants, but of similar colours to those suggested by Tabitha.



Tabitha was joined by her family, the gardeners, the Headteacher and pupils from St Peter's School, Harrogate to see the result.

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School Garden Award

Harrogate in Bloom's School Garden Award is for all schools - both Primary/Junior Schools and Secondary/Senior Schools and is launched in May each year. A trophy is awarded for the best School Garden.

Judges are looking for:

- A good first impression
- How the gardens are making a difference to the school environment.
- How the gardens are maintained for everyone visiting the school to enjoy.
- How the gardens encourage wildlife.
- Whether the pupils directly involved in creating and maintaining the garden.

Three Schools entered in 2024, and **Oatlands Junior School** was the proud winners of this competition in 2024. We are expecting for more entries in 2025.



Harrogate in Bloom Awards

The HiB Awards are launched in May each year.

The categories are:

- Hotels and Guest Houses
- Pubs and Restaurants
- Communal grounds
- Residential Community

Points are awarded for:

- First Impression/ overall design
- Planting appropriate in colour/scale with summer interest
- Containers appropriate size and style
- Paving, paths, fabric well maintained/ signage in good order.
- Plants in good condition/disease free/dead headed.
- Noticeable environmental features and/or residents' involvement.



Floral Shop Window Competition

Harrogate in Bloom, working in partnership with Harrogate BID, organises a Floral Shop Window Competition for the town centre shops, encouraging local businesses to celebrate our town's floral heritage. The competition is designed to coincide with the BID's Floral Summer of Celebration.

Judges award points for key aspects including innovation and a 'wow factor', planting, size and style of containers, maintenance of paving, paths and signage, condition of the plants and noticeable environmentally friendly features.



The winner of the 2024 Shop Window competition was **Piglet in Bed**.

Awards Ceremony

To celebrate all our fantastic competition entries, we hold an award ceremony in September / October at one of our local hotels. The 2025 award ceremony will be at The Cedar Court Hotel on 8th October with Phil Airey, head of Horticap and Nick Smith, Director of the Harrogate Flower Shows, presenting the awards.



Engagement with local schools

We have worked hard in the last couple of years to increase our engagement with local schools as we know that getting young people involved with gardening and the environment can have life-time benefits.

In addition to our engagement with local schools through our competitions:

- Pine Street Allotments have regular visits from Bilton Grange Primary School to show the children how fruit and vegetables grow and to talk about the importance of looking after the environment. 42 reception children visited in March and 77 children from year 1 and 2 will be visiting in July.
- Richard Taylor Primary School has a gardening club that visit Pine Street Allotments once or twice a year. Gwyn Groves, one of the plot holders, is their mentor. He is helping them to prepare a veg box for a competition at the Great Yorkshire Show which is open to schools from all over the county.
- One of our Harrogate in Bloom members has been supporting the Gardening Club at Rossett Acre Primary School, joining the group to help with gardening and also providing plants. Harlow Hill Allotments nominated the gardening club to receive a donation from their Open day on 14th June 2025 to buy some new plants for the planters just outside the School Reception.



Our schools

Many of our schools understand the importance of horticulture and engaging with the environment and build these key elements into their school life. Here is information from some of them that Harrogate in Bloom is in contact with:

Oatlands Junior School started a bi-weekly gardening club for the children in 2024. The children have been involved in weeding and planting bulbs.

- The Eco Committee has been refilling our bird feeders and is focusing on keeping our school grounds litter-free, including by redesigning our bins to get a more 'Eco' message across.
- The biggest project in 2024 was to plant 420 tree saplings that we've been granted by the Woodland Trust to help rewild the school grounds, and to encourage more wildlife into our local area.
- In 2025 a number of overgrown shrubs and brambles have been removed. Mulch has gone in to create a low maintenance area, with a large cherry blossom tree planted centrally.
- Two friendship benches have been placed at the bottom of the structure for children to use and sit on.



Lauren, Y3 - "We have put up lots of bird feeders around school and in our nature area to welcome more birds into our school grounds. The feeders help to keep the birds fed when the ground is hard during frosty weather or periods of very dry weather, like now."

Coppice Valley Primary School are lucky enough to have lots of outdoor space and have different areas – community allotment, butterfly garden, planted areas - around school, a nature area and a bog garden in addition to the playing fields. These areas are used regularly for outdoor learning, physical and mental health activities and by the local community:

- Every pupil at Coppice Valley had the opportunity to plant a tree as part of our Tree Planting Project in partnership with White Rose Forest and S&D Landscapes Wakefield. These trees will grow into a beautiful nature trail.
- School staff run after-school gardening clubs in KS1 and KS2 which offers children the opportunity to learn about growing plants, understanding soil, and discover how food is grown.
- The Forest and Nature School provides children with opportunities to explore outdoor areas, developing a connection with the natural world through play, discovery, and hands-on learning in an outdoor setting.
- Children enjoy learning outdoors, developing an appreciation of nature while using the natural environment to explore all subjects including planting, observing natural habitats, and growing their own food.
- The school uses composters and wormeries to recycle food waste, teaching children about sustainable waste and soil.
- The Eco Warriors club focuses on recycling materials for outdoor use, collecting rainwater and collecting waste for the composters. The children learn about sustainability and make a positive impact on their environment.
- The community allotment is used by children during school to learn about growing food and nature. It is also a shared space for families in our community to come together, garden, and enjoy the outdoors.
- All the school community is encouraged to get involved and help with planting and maintaining the flower beds.



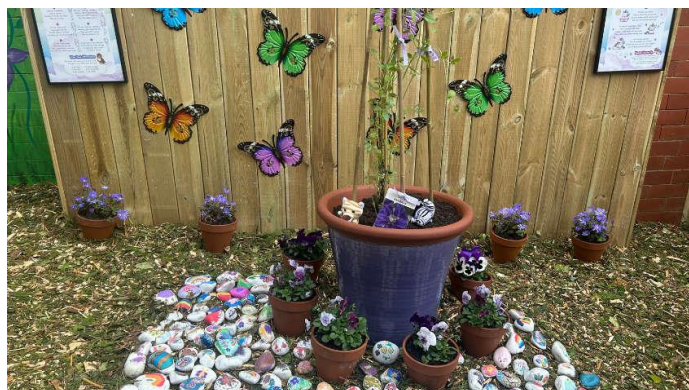
"Being outside, quiet and peaceful. Feel relaxed"

"It's peaceful. I like watching what I've planted grow"

Smantha Wright, teacher at Coppice Valley School reports:

Horticulture has played a key role in strengthening our school community by bringing together children, parents, and staff through our community allotment, nature area, and outdoor learning spaces. Our shared spaces have encouraged hands-on learning, teamwork, and a deeper connection to nature.

Our planting projects and clubs have also supported children's well-being, offering calming activities to nurture, a safe space to talk and a feeling of belonging.



Brackenfield School sadly lost one of their young pupils to leukaemia this year. A garden has been created in her memory at the school for the children.

- Arabella's mum, said she wanted the space to be somewhere people could come and sit and be quiet or do some crafting or just remember Arabella.
- When the garden was opened all of the children sang a special song composed by their music teacher and they had all painted pebbles to place within the garden too.

Oatlands Infant School has an onsite garden and pond, which the children use on a regular basis.

- The school successfully bid for a £9,000 grant from the Mukherjee Trust, and in summer 2024 the garden was fully renovated with the help of the team, the children and Harrogate Joinery. This included laying paths, building shelters and barriers, rebuilding the entrance archway and making the area more wildlife friendly with hedgehog houses, bird boxes, a bug hotel and insect-friendly planting.
- The school was awarded bronze in the 'Harrogate in Bloom School Garden' competition in summer 2024, and we also received a 'Wildlife Gardening Award' from Yorkshire Wildlife Trust in September 2024.
- A gate will soon be installed, so the local community can use the garden outside school hours.
- The Oatlands Infant children use this space regularly throughout their learning journey here in school.
 - The Eco Council plant wildflowers and carry out wildlife audits, such as the great British bird watch.
 - The children harvest tomatoes, peas, apples and blackberries for snack times and lunches, and the black walnuts are given away to the community.
 - The wellbeing club potter about in the garden, and the art club do wild artwork.
 - The gardens are used to learn all about animals and habitats.
 - The children carry out litter picks in the area.



Rossett Acre Primary School

- Every week, a small number of children takes part in a nurture focused Gardening Club. This is aimed at children who need a little extra support, and the children really enjoy their time learning a variety of practical and social skills through gardening.
- There are in-class projects running throughout the year. Early Years planted a herb garden in raised planters, Year 2 grew runner beans, Year 5 grew spring onions.
- The children have worked especially hard on the Sensory Garden: planting flowers to attract bees, planting herbs, bulbs and maintaining the existing plants.
- There are apple trees and blackberry bushes in school. The fruit is used for baking in Life Skills sessions and also to feed the school chickens!
- Every year, Early Years to Year 5 take part in Forest School and spend time learning within the Forest School area. They learn many bushcraft skills and love the time outdoors.
- Regular litter picks help to keep the lovely grounds tidy.
(Judges will meet staff and children from Rossett Acre on their visit)

Donation of a garden

The North of England Horticultural Society, which organises Harrogate Flower Shows, approached Harrogate Hospital and Community Charity about gifting a garden to the hospital.

- In February 2025, the garden, in a courtyard adjacent to the maternity ward, was unveiled.
- Expectant parents can enjoy the plants and flowers from a wooden bench.
- The garden, which was featured in the Spring Flower Show, was donated as part of the show's legacy gardens project, which aims to give new life to the otherwise temporary gardens featured at the annual Spring and Autumn Flower Shows.



Engagement with other groups

On **St Andrews Allotments**, three plots are allocated to community groups - to Springwater Community Special Needs School for children with special needs: to MIND for those with mental health issues and to 'Time Together' for those with Autism and other disabilities. A different small plot has been allocated to an individual who is autistic. They have had a lot of help from other plot holders and have a nice plot now.

Pine Street Allotments had 15 scouts in May, planting, looking at the wormery and generally learning a little about allotments.

Fund-raising and donations for local organisations

- **Harrogate & District Allotment Federation** holds an annual Show in August each year. This event allows plot holders to showcase their best produce. It is also a fund-raising event for a chosen local charity. In 2024 the show raised £600 for Open Country, a local charity helping people with disabilities to access and enjoy the countryside.
- The HDAF also donates the fruit and vegetables from the Show benches to Resurrected Bites, a local charity aiming to reduce food waste, loneliness and food poverty.
- **Harrogate in Bloom and Harrogate Civic Society** both have stalls at the Allotment Show to engage local people with their activities.
- **Harlow Hill Allotments** holds an annual Open Day donating the funds raised to local organisations. In 2024, £300 was donated to help with the refurbishment of the Harlow Hill Community Centre and £300 to Horticap. The 2025 charities are Rossett Acre Primary School Gardening Club and Horticap.
- **Pine Street Allotments** has raised many thousands of pounds for charities over the years. In 2024 they raised £2000 at their Open Day and Tabletop plant sale for Harrogate Town Community Foundation and Bilton library. Their 2025 charities are Harrogate Horizon, Bilton Conservation group, and Bilton Library.
- **Unity Grove Allotments** raised £1200 for The Robert Ogden Macmillan Cancer Support Centre & The Endoscopy Fund at Harrogate Hospital at their Open Day on 7th September 2024.



Remembrance – a community collaboration



- In 2022, the Committee at Bilton Community Centre decided to acknowledge Remembrance Day. Bags of poppies, knitted and crochet, red, white and purple, were donated by groups who use the centre.
- A working party was set up in May 2023 to attach the poppies to the netting.
- The poppies were displayed in 2023 and again in 2024.
- In 2025, another working party was set up to attach more poppies to more netting to increase the display.

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Woodlands Community Garden can be found behind the Woodlands Methodist Church on Wetherby Road, Harrogate. In 2013, it was a large, grassed space, which has been turned into a community garden for local residents and community groups.

- 8 volunteers garden weekly on a Wednesday morning and a couple of families garden on Sunday once a month.
- This year 5 GCSE students doing their Duke of Edinburgh Award are volunteering in the garden on Sunday afternoons
- Brownies regularly use the garden.
- In May 2025, 80 reception and nursery children were welcomed to the garden before half term to smell/taste/touch the vegetables and herbs. The children particularly enjoyed seeing each other pull a 'lemon face' when they tried lemon sorrel! The teachers were very enthusiastic and hope to use the garden as a teaching resource in the future.



Fund-raising & Donations

- In 2024, a **charity breakfast at the Harrogate Spring Flower Show** raised £2000 for Harrogate in Bloom.
- In December 2024, Harrogate in Bloom received a generous donation from the **Harrogate MG and Classic Car Club**. The donation of £250 was received by Chris Beard on behalf of Harrogate in Bloom.



In 2012, Harrogate in Bloom raised funds through local businesses to place a crown on the Crown Roundabout for the late **Queen's Diamond Jubilee**. A plaque was placed outside the Crown Hotel to acknowledge the donors. The plaque has deteriorated over the years, so this year we are raising funds to replace it by approaching some of the original contributors and other local businesses.

Conclusion

We are extremely proud of our beautiful town. Our groups, businesses and schools are working hard together to make Harrogate a wonderful place to live, work and visit.

Our horticultural practices are continuing to develop as we understand the needs of the environment more clearly. NYC, working with our community groups, is making great progress to improve and enhance our natural spaces.

In 2025, we have particularly concentrated on our links with local schools as we are very aware of the importance of getting children to understand the benefits gained from working outdoors and improving their knowledge of plants and the natural environment. In the future, we hope to continually improve these working relationships.

This year, supported by Harrogate Business Improvement District and the Harrogate Chamber of Commerce, we have also made great efforts to engage with more local businesses and to increase the number of them entering our competitions.

All our groups support and interact with each other; whether it is an allotment site raising funds for Horticap, the Harrogate Flower Show storing the Allotment Federation's equipment, the Civic Society working with Friends of Valley Gardens, Hookstone and Stonefall Action Group holding a joint AGM with Woodlands Community Garden, or Horticap providing topsoil for one of our schools. Our networks are strong and Harrogate in Bloom is key to enabling those networks to strengthen further.

There is always more to do, but we are a well-established organisation with the constituent groups all working for the same aims and determined to **keep Harrogate looking blooming lovely**.