



# Seed of AN IDEA

*Raithwaite Sandsend Hotel* has created the UK's very first hotel Forest Garden in North Yorkshire. **Ollie Hunter**, the food, drink and sustainability director, tells us more



RAITHWAITE SANDSEND HOTEL



**Q** *What originally inspired the Forest Garden?*

**A** After doing lots of research into sustainable farming during the first lockdown, I came across the concept of a Forest Garden and was blown away. An intelligent permaculture design reliant on many edible species creating a harmonious ecosystem. So simple and yet so delicious.

**Q** *How long has it been in the making?*

**A** Ever since meeting Sapling Spirits, who plant a tree for each bottle of their vodka sold. We wanted to collaborate (a natural meeting of minds with a shared passion for sustainability), to bring to life the exciting new permaculture project, which is the first of its kind in a hotel in the UK.

Whilst the innovative permaculture designs have been in the making for over a year, we initially planted over 500 trees and shrubs in November 2021, followed by 500 smaller plants and herbs in April 2022.

**Q** *It's an agronomic system – what does that mean?*

**A** The Forest Garden is designed to mimic a natural forest using a layering of tall trees to form the canopy and sub-canopy, right down to bushes, shrubs, and herbs on the ground level – all working together to form a stable and sustainable ecosystem.

OLLIE HUNTER AT WORK



THE HOTEL HAS PARTNERED WITH SAPLING

“It's exciting to see the Forest Garden supplying our kitchen with fresh, perennial fruits, herbs and spices”

**Q** *What kind of plants would we find in the garden?*

**A** We've deliberately designed the garden with a combination of hardy plants, which require minimal human interference, and that are biologically sustainable, suited to the Yorkshire climate and yield a variety of produce across all seasons – the likes of apples, raspberries, pears, sage, lavender, juniper, mulberry, blackcurrant and gooseberries.

**Q** *What will it offer the hotel's chefs and mixologists?*

**A** We're expecting our first proper Forest Garden harvest next year, which will complement what we already have growing in our new poly-tunnels and the “no-dig” beds. It will be hugely exciting to see the Forest Garden supplying our bar and kitchen with delicious, fresh, perennial fruits, herbs, and spices – and I know the chefs can't wait to get creative with the ingredients we're growing.

**Q** *What kind of dishes will it inspire?*

**A** Our menus change seasonally, to make the best of the fresh produce and the brilliant local suppliers we're lucky to have on our doorstep. For example, at the moment our veg garden inspired arancini and loin of lamb with wild garlic crumb, fondant potato, crispy lamb shoulder and asparagus, which is proving popular.





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THE HOTEL'S MENU WILL BENEFIT FROM THE FOREST GARDEN

INSIDE THE RESTAURANT AND BAR



“Everything we do must be a positive action forward to help protect or regenerate nature”

**Q Do you have other plans for more hotel gardens?**

**A** Yes, lots! We're just about to finish our “no-dig” organic kitchen garden, which is exciting to see come to life. And so much incredible fresh produce is already being harvested, which is wholly shaping our seasonal menus. We've also recently updated the orchard and the original walled garden, adding productive perennials and beneficial companion plantings. Now that the main infrastructure is in place

our head gardener, Jamie, and his team are spending time sowing, growing, and building the soil health of the gardens.

**Q Why is sustainability so important for you?**

**A** I think if you love nature, then you love sustainability, as the two go hand in hand. I was initially inspired by David Attenborough's Planet Earth in 2008, which really shed light on the impact that modern society has had on our planet and why we needed to change our behaviours urgently. Thankfully, sustainability has now become more of a mainstream conversation whereby environmental issues are regularly discussed within the news, politics, and business – all of which impact our consumer behaviours and the way we live our lives.

At Raithwaite Sandsend I saw an exciting opportunity to inspire change and reimagine the guest experience – ensuring that sustainability is at the absolute core of the business. Over the past two years, working alongside a fantastic new management team and host of local suppliers, we have relaunched the hotel with a new vision.

We recognise that it's our responsibility to respect nature and the stunning surroundings that have come to be known as one of the hotel's biggest assets. In this sense, everything we do must be a positive action forward to help protect or regenerate nature.

**Q What else is happening at Raithwaite Sandsend this summer?**

**A** We're hosting lots of activities, to help our guests explore and enjoy the gardens. The brass rubbing trail is particularly fun for families, or give the escape route trail a try. And you can do a DIY garden tour, to discover the award-winning landscape, with our in-house guide – we provide maps and you set-off to uncover QR codes as you walk to reveal snippets of information about the flora and fauna you can spot along the way. We're also hosting afternoon tea hampers, for picnics on the lawn to celebrate the Jubilee, and our Sunday music sessions are back with live jazz, soul, and indie-folk performances on our outdoor terrace. 🎵

[raithwaitesandsend.co.uk](http://raithwaitesandsend.co.uk)

