

# SOUNDS OF NATURE TEAM

A dedicated and dynamic group of artists and outdoor educators, along with University of Reading staff, developed this short pilot programme of workshops.

Scroll down to learn more about the main collaborators.

## CHARLOTTE ALLCHIN

Charlotte Allchin is a local environmental education practitioner. She has a broad education and therapeutic approach background and works with families, individuals and with children from the very youngest through to secondary age. She delivers accredited training in Forest School, Outdoor Learning and Outdoor Play for adults working with young people.



She believes passionately in educating our communities about the value of nature stewardship and conservation for future generations and the importance of involving people of all ages and backgrounds in doing so.

"Nature allows so many opportunities to experience awe and wonder and to better understand our place in the world. Everyone should have that experience, not just a privileged few."

Check out more of Charlotte's work on [Funsa](#).

## TERESA VERNEY-BROOKES

Professor Queen-Bee (AKA Teresa Verney-Brookes) has an academic background in Ecology and Environmental Science. She uses a range of artforms as conduits to convey complex issues around wildlife conservation and sustainability in fun and accessible ways. Teresa has coined the phrase of 'Eco-Clowning' to describe her work. Teresa also runs an Outdoor Environmental Education and Forest School consultancy - called 'Green Trees'.



Learn more about Teresa on her [website](#).

## RICHARD BENTLEY

Listening is at the heart of my practice, listening for the sacred in the mundane. As a sound artist my work explores contemplative listening and sound art practices, inviting others to foster awareness of the soundscape and cultivate a playful relationship with sound-making. I collaborate with fellow artists and like-minded organisations to develop participatory workshops, soundwalks, audio tours, e-health initiatives and a range of music and sound works.



I have a PhD in Sound Arts following a Masters Degree in Community Arts at Goldsmith's University of London. I have spent the last nine years working as a sound artist and musician for clients such as The Woodland Trust, Historic England, Crisis, Reading University, Royal Berkshire NHS Trust, Intelligent Health, The Roald Dahl Museum, Nature Nurture, The Annual Daydream Harvest, Beautiful Creatures and Festive Road. I am a qualified lecturer (Cert. Ed. and FHEA) with twenty years teaching experience and an ambassador for [Hush City App](#), [Silent Space](#) and UK representative for [Quiet Parks International](#).

Learn more about Richard on his [website](#).

## JULIE HAWKINS

Julie Hawkins is Professor of Plant Systemics and Evolution at the University of Reading. Her areas of interest include plant taxonomy and evolution, ethnobotany and evolutionary ethnobotany, and wildlife trade and conservation.

Learn more about Julia on the University of Reading's [website](#).



## ALASTAIR CULHAM

Alastair Culham is Associate Professor of Botany and Curator of the Reading University Herbarium at the University of Reading.

Learn more about Alastair on the University of Reading's [website](#).



## DUNCAN ZACKS

Duncan Zacks is the Deputy Head of Grounds Maintenance at the University of Reading.

His desire to make the Harris Gardens as accessible as possible to the public inspired this exciting art collaboration between the community and University.

*"The recent pandemic showed how important quality green spaces are to urban communities, and the popularity of the Harris Garden has grown as more and more people have discovered it. This fantastic project is part of a wider aim to increase accessibility to the garden and also to the specimens and collections that it contains." - Duncan Zacks*

## SARAH GARDNER

Sarah Gardner, previously of the University of Reading Community Team, was a key collaborator with University Arts Strategy Team, to bring this project together.

We asked her about her motivations for investing in this project, and her hopes for the project.



### **Why did the Community Team invest in this work?**

The Sounds of Nature project was a creative and exciting way to promote the Harris Gardens as a free resource to community groups in Reading. Lots of people who do not study or work at the University have no idea of the amazing resources on campus, including the green space. This was something the Community team heard time and again - people did not know what was available or did not feel welcome or 'allowed' to use the campus. The Harris Gardens are one of the most beautiful spaces with huge historical and scientific value that it seemed important to introduce it to as many people as possible, particularly young people and marginalised communities.

### **What were your hopes for the project?**

My main hope was that people who did not usually use the campus or feel welcome on campus would discover this delightful space and tell all their friends and family about it. The project was conceived prior to the pandemic but this hope became even more precious as we were forced to realise how necessary access to nature is. My other hope was that we would share the history of the botanical gardens amongst people in an accessible and innovative way - telling the story of the plants in a way which would inspire future botanists or nature-lovers.

It was a key aim of the Community team that students were empowered to work with Reading-based communities and act as ambassadors for the University. The students played a really key role in this project with their huge enthusiasm, passion and interest. Quite a few had also never heard of the Harris Gardens so it was as much a discovery for them as for the schools and community groups they worked with. We couldn't have delivered this work without them.

## STÉPHANIE MICHELL

Stéphanie Mitchell is a project manager and consultant specialising in supporting artists, creative practitioners and cultural leaders to plan and deliver their creative projects. She also works with different community groups as an organiser. She sometimes operates under the name [\*we like detail\*](#).



Previously Stéph supported the planning and delivery of commissions and multi-artist, multi-venue exhibitions, workshops and performances for [Reading International](#), a contemporary art organisation based in Reading, England.

Before that, as Head of Production at Doc Society, a social justice documentary film foundation, Stéph ran their worldwide events programme at such venues as New York Times Center, New World Center in Miami, and the Oslo Opera House, Norway. Stéph has also worked with the Independent Cinema Office, the UK Film Council, and run an international film festival in the North East of England that included a 100-strong film programme, industry summit and education programme.