

Harris Gardens Audio Trail SCRIPT

Stops	Plant/Topic	Script	Guide Points
Intro		<p>L – Good day to you and a warm welcome to the Harris Garden – my name is Luke and I am the Head Gardiner and your guide for today</p> <p>B – Hey, don't forget about me</p> <p>L – Whoops sorry Betsy! May I also introduce my helper – Betsy.</p> <p>B – Yes, thank-you Luke! I want to be the head gardener when I am older – so I help out here at the garden when I can.</p> <p>L - You do Betsy, you do. Now, the Harris Garden was established in 1972 and expanded into its current form in 1988. It is named after the late Professor, do you remember his name?</p> <p>B - Tom Harris.</p> <p>L -Well done, he was a distinguished palaeobotanist at the University of Reading and a keen gardener too. Before we start the tour, can we give you a couple of health and safety tips? Firstly, please don't eat anything you find in the garden, as some plants are poisonous. Also, if you touch the plants, please wash your hands before you eat.</p> <p>B - Come on Luke, let's get started. Just follow the directions we give you around the garden and you can use the app to make sure you're going the right way.</p>	<p>Welcome to The Harris Garden – please close the gate behind you. Now head towards the site map on the right-hand side of the path and there you can see exactly where you are!</p>
1	Witch Hazel	<p>L – Within the large island bed on your left is a lovely low spreading shrub called 'Witch Hazel'. It's a great plant to have in your garden, as it flowers during the winter months – adding much needed colour at that time of year. If you visit during January, February or March you can spot it's tasselled yellow flowers – each of which has four petals. If you visit the garden during the spring and summer you can see its pretty, decorative leaves – which turn a beautiful colour in the autumn.</p> <p>B – Do you think it is called Witch Hazel because witches use the wood to make their broomsticks?</p> <p>L – (Laughs) well, what I do know is that it's used in medicine and general cleaning, as it has antiseptic properties – it's also used in products such as eye drops.</p>	<p>Please follow the main path for a short distance until you reach the large island bed within the grassy area on the left-hand side of the main path.</p>

		<p>B – In that case, I guess witches could use it to clean their broomsticks too? Hey Luke, what’s that lovely smell?</p> <p>L – That is coming from the fragrant garden which is on the right-hand side of the path – I really encourage you all to have a wander through here on your way out of the garden - as it smells very different throughout the changing seasons.</p>	
2	Marshy area /Giant rhubarb	<p>L - Depending on what time of year you visit the Harris Garden you may be able to enjoy the sight of the Giant Rhubarb plant (also called Gunnera) which originates from South America. It is one of our largest and most spectacular plants that likes to grow around the sides of ponds and marshy areas, just like here.</p> <p>B – Where? I can’t see them! I can only see those funny dead hairy logs that look a bit like lazy crocodiles.</p> <p>L – Ah yes, during the winter months that’s what the Giant Rhubarb looks like – but don’t worry they aren’t crocodiles! Come May, its new leaves start unfurling and you will be able to see its spiky green stems with giant leaves shooting out the top. These spikes are really clever as they contain a bacteria that captures nitrogen from the atmosphere and then feeds it to the plant in exchange for sugars.</p> <p>B – Wow, that’s amazing – so it’s a plant that fertilises itself and has its own built-in nitrogen supply – now that really is clever! I bet it loves that lovely, squelchy mud!</p> <p>L – Yes it does, but in some parts of Britain the plant has become a problem, as it grows rather ‘too’ well. However, it’s not a problem here in the Harris Garden, as Reading is a bit dry.</p>	<p>Continue along the main path and take the left fork where it splits ways.</p> <p>Carry on walking along this left-hand fork - and do listen out for any birds singing or any other creatures that enjoy the garden too</p>
3	Monkey puzzle tree	<p>B – what’s that funny looking tree on the right? That one there, that has lots of spikes. I don’t think I have ever spotted that before.</p> <p>L – That’s called a Monkey Puzzle tree.</p> <p>B – So, does that mean that monkeys like to sit underneath to do their puzzles?</p> <p>L - Mmmm, maybe. I was told, that because its branches are covered in sharp triangular leaves, a monkey might find it very puzzling to climb!</p>	<p>Continue to wander along the same main path as it veers slightly to the left. Keep your eyes peeled for a tree which has branches growing horizontally, ones that are straight outwards rather than upwards.</p>

		<p>B – Or maybe it's called that because the tree branches have a sweeping shape that looks a bit like a monkey's tail? I wonder if the people doing this walk can think of any other reasons how the tree got its name?</p> <p>[Short break]</p> <p>L – The Monkey Puzzle is native to Chile and was introduced to the UK in the 1790's and became very popular in large Victorian gardens as they can grow quite tall and have a really distinctive shape.</p>	
4	Ginkgo biloba	<p>B - Ah ha - I have found it - it's called Ginkgo biloba, or the Maidenhair tree! I must admit that I did cheat a bit, as I read its label!</p> <p>L - That's not cheating, I call it good detective work Betsy! Although, this tree is quite easy to identify without its label, as it usually has fairly horizontal side branches. Each branch has short stubby shoots that bare the leaves. This is a very unusual and distinctive way of growing that you don't see in many plants.</p> <p>B - I really love its strange fan shaped, fleshy leaves that turn a wonderful golden, yellow colour in the autumn. I heard that this plant is sometimes called a 'modern fossil'? (<i>in a questioning voice</i>)</p> <p>L - Yes, they are a very ancient lineage of tree and relatives of this plant date back to around 270 million years ago - which predates dinosaurs. There are lots of fossils of the Ginkgo biloba tree. They are native to a small area of China and interestingly, they are 'dioecious' - which means there are separate male and female Ginkgo biloba trees. The seeds of the female trees are quite fleshy and widely used in Asian cuisine, as well as in herbal medicine to improve memory. However, when mature, these fleshy seeds can smell quite rancid - and a bit like vomit or sewage!</p> <p>B - Urgh! Yuk! I am now hoping these Maidenhair Trees are males!</p> <p>L - Yes, they are! Male Ginkgo bilobas are popular as street trees in Europe and North America as they are very tolerant of pollution.</p>	Carry on walking along the main path and stop at the large tree on your left
5	Festigate Oak	<p>L – I think this has to be my favourite tree here in the Harris Garden – the Fastigate Oak.</p> <p>B – Are you sure this is an oak tree? It looks very different to the oak in my park. I love laying under it, looking up at the leaves.</p>	Keep on wandering along the main path and you will see a bench on the right-hand side which is where you are heading

		<p>L – There are many different types of oak – which are all related – a bit like cousins. In botanic terms, the word ‘fastigiata’ describes branches that are more or less parallel to the main stem or trunk. So, if you really look at this tree – you can probably see that its branches are more upright than our native oaks, like the one in your park.</p> <p>B – I can’t believe how twirly its branches are and what strange shapes some of them make. I can see branches that have gaps, then join again and then separate again.... How strange!</p> <p>L- Indeed! Where some of the branches have rubbed together, they have grafted back naturally. Can you also see the Cyclamen growing around its trunk? Cyclamen used to be known as ‘sour bread,’ because pigs would dig it up and eat it. It was introduced into Britain for cultivation in the 1500’s and has been a very popular garden variety ever since.</p> <p>B - It also grows in many other areas in and around the Harris Garden too. Some have ivy shaped leaves, some have really thin leaves and others are very silvery in colour.</p>	
6	Cherry bowl	<p>B – Can we sit on the bench for a while? I really do need a rest.</p> <p>L – Indeed, we can! This area is called the cherry bowl, so-called because if you take a good look around, it is planted up with several varieties of cherry trees, in a circular, bowl like shape.</p> <p>B - Let’s play a quick game. I will give you a list of names and you have to guess if they are the actual names of some of the varieties growing here in the Cherry Bowl, or if I have made the name up!” Here we go -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cherry delight (no) ● Pink perfection (yes) ● Tutti Fruiti (no) ● Autumn Glory (yes) <p>L - To be honest, this really is one of my favourite spots in the Harris Garden. Most days I sit for a while and just enjoy listening to the birds and other wildlife here in the garden. I also shut my eyes, as this really helps me to concentrate on the sounds of nature. Let’s close our eyes now.....and just listen to the garden!</p>	<p>You can open your eyes now, stand up and continue a few steps along the main path. Then take a sharp right onto the grassy path. Keep going as the path veers around to the right until you see the fallen tree trunk to the right of the path.</p>
7	Dead wood	<p>B – Can I ask you a quick question Luke – why is there so much dead wood lying around. It looks a bit out of place as everywhere else in the garden looks so neat and tidy?</p>	<p>Continue along the grassy path then at the crossroads, take a sharp left-hand turn.</p>

		<p>L – That’s a really good question Betsy. We have left piles of dead wood and fallen tree trunks all around the garden on purpose, as it provides shelter and food for a wide range of creatures – such as beetles and other minibeasts. These in turn provide food for a range of other creatures such as small mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians, who may also find shelter or even hibernate in some of the nooks and crannies.</p> <p>B – What a fantastic idea, I am going to make some dead wood habitats in my garden when I get home! Look at all of the holes in the wood.....</p>	
8	Juniper	<p>B - Juniper is one of the plants I particularly like visiting in the summer. When it’s had the hot sun on it, it smells so beautiful.</p> <p>L - Juniper, which is a scented conifer, is of course, the main flavouring of gin. People often talk about juniper ‘berries’ but they’re not actually berries, they’re like small pinecones that have scales. But, instead of being hard and woody, they get very soft and fleshy. The Juniper is native to the UK, though they grow throughout the Mediterranean too.</p> <p>B - And as you told me recently Luke, the different species all smell very different from each other.</p> <p>L - Yes, that's right and many of the bespoke gins available now, use different species of juniper.</p> <p>B - Well, that's for you grown-ups! But a fact that I do know about Juniper trees is that their seeds are dispersed by birds.</p>	Keep walking along the grassy path as it veers to the right. You should then be able to see the dead hedge in front of you, which the path runs adjacent to.

<p>9</p>	<p>Dead wood hedge</p>	<p>L - Oh look Betsy, there's Janet, one of the volunteers who helps to manage the garden.</p> <p>Janet - Hello there, I'm just adding a few branches to this dead wood hedge. Whether living or dead hedges provide a fantastic habitat for a whole range of creatures. They link up habitats and give safe cover for any creatures moving between them. It also helps to protect the young hazel trees that we have recently planted in this area.</p> <p>B - So, for many creatures, hedges of all kinds act as safe super-highways that link-up various habitats!</p> <p>Janet - That is correct Betsy. Right, sadly I can't stand here chatting as I'm heading for the apple orchard that you can see ahead of you. Maybe you can come and have a look at this area later, once you've finished the tour? My task today is to prune the orchard trees to about an adult's head height. This means the fruit can be harvested without having to stretch up or climb the trees!</p>	<p>In front of the dead hedge, take a sharp right-hand turn - onto the grassy path with trees both sides of you. If you reach the apple orchard then you've gone too far!</p> <p>As you enjoy this wooded area - keep an eye out, as on the left-hand side of the path are a type of tree called the Plymouth Pear.</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Plymouth Pear</p>	<p>L - Let's stop here, as to the left of the path are three really rare trees which are called 'Plymouth pear' - although it is not a fruit tree used by humans.</p> <p>This species was first reported in Britain during the 1800's, but was known in France and Spain before that. These trees are here as a direct result of the research of a Professor of Botany working at Reading University – called Alastair Culham. During the 1990's, Alastair worked on a project with the Royal Botanical Gardens and English Nature. The project looked into the genetics of the Plymouth Pear within its natural habitat around Plymouth and Truro in Cornwall. The tree is now on schedule eight of the Wildlife and Countryside Act – which means it is illegal to dig it up or damage it.</p> <p>B - It's so good to know we have such a rare tree, right here in the Harris Garden and that they are being so well looked after by the staff and volunteers.</p> <p>L – Can you see or hear any birds as you walk through this area?</p>	<p>Keep going on the grassy path. You will pass a bench on your right-hand side and soon after you will rejoin the main path again. When you get there, turn left and then almost immediately right onto a wood chip path that will take you through the Autumn Border.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Autumn Border</p>	<p>B – I really love reading all of the plant names in this area. Can you spot the Black mondo? Why do you think this plant was given this name? My other favourite plant name here is 'Lady in Red'. I like to give plants my own names, depending on how they look, what colour they are, their shape, size, smell, you know. Then, I look at its actual name on the</p>	<p>Continue on the wood chip path until we rejoin the main path again. Then, turn right and we're nearly reaching the end of the tour.</p>

		<p>black labels. I think sometimes the names I give the plants are much better and funnier! You could try this game too.</p>	
12	Bat box on standing dead wood	<p>L – This is an example of what we call ‘standing dead wood,’ which is a great habitat for lots of creatures. In particular a magnificent insect called the Stag Beetle whose larvae feed on dead wood. They particularly like dead wood that’s buried underground, such as the roots of this tree.</p> <p>B - I helped make the bat box hanging on the trunk of this tree. During the summer holidays, Luke and I often stay here in the garden until it starts getting dark. So, we get to see a whole range of different nocturnal creatures – including moths and bats. Luke sometimes brings his bat detector. How does the bat detector work again Luke?</p> <p>L – Bats use echolocation to navigate and hunt for insects in the dark. The sounds they make to do this are too high-pitched for most of us to hear. A bat detector enables you to hear the sounds the bats are making by pitching it down to frequency we can hear.</p> <p>B - And then we can identify each species of bat by the sounds they make. Some species make a series of clicks and others make a noise that sounds a bit like wet slaps!</p> <p>L - Bats have fabulous names too - such as Soprano pipistrelle, Common noctule, Common pipistrelle, Daubenton’s bat, Serotine bat, and Brown long eared bat - all of which have been recorded here on campus.</p> <p>B – This garden smells different as it gets dark. It contains lots of night scented flowers including - now let me get this right - Clerodendron bungei which grows on the autumn bank and is loved by hawkmoths.</p> <p>L – Yes, and during the daytime in the summer months this area is also alive with bees and other pollinating insects. It’s a nectar rich, wildflower meadow.</p>	<p>Continue wandering along the main path until you reach the next large dead tree trunk on the left-hand side of the path.</p>
13	Final Stop - fork in path/Turkey oak	<p>B - Well Luke, on the left-hand side of the path is my favourite tree, the giant Turkey Oak. It’s got low branches that spread really wide. Can you see this tree? Over there. It’s the really big one.</p> <p>L - Yes, it really is magnificent and marks the end of our walk.</p> <p>B – But Luke, our guests have not visited Pete’s shed yet, or the Mediterranean Garden and there’s lots of other interesting areas they can see if they carry on.</p>	<p>Continue along the main path until you reach the fork – the left fork continues around the rest of the garden and the right-hand fork takes you back to the entrance gate and the fragrant garden area.</p>

L – Well, I am afraid that we have to go home now. Listeners, please feel free to explore the rest of the garden, as the tour has only taken you around a small section of it. You can take the left-hand fork in the path to explore more of the garden. Or, you can take the right-hand fork, which leads you back to the gate where we started. If you're heading back, don't forget to visit the fragrant garden on your left, just before you reach the entrance gate.

B – Oh, okay Luke! Well listeners, it was lovely to meet you and I hope you enjoy the rest of the Harris Garden. Please come back and visit us again. The garden looks, smells, and sounds really different not only throughout the seasons, but also according to what time of day you visit. Bye.

Janet - [in the distance] and it's goodbye from me too!

L – ...and it's goodbye from me as well! But please do visit our website for more details and the dates of our charity open days, when the walled garden will be open. We also put on guided walks and all sorts of other events.