

## PRACTICAL RESIDENCY IN AGROECOLOGY

**April – October 2024**

An exciting opportunity to learn the practical skills needed to grow food and practice horticulture whilst working with nature and ecological cycles.



### ABOUT THE COURSE

Our current mainstream food system is in need of profound healing and repair. If you want to gain skills and learn about new approaches to help achieve this, then this six month residency is for you. Explore with us how to protect and restore the soil, foster and sustain a healthy ecosystem, and use renewable resources whilst growing an abundance of delicious vegetables for use in the college kitchens.

Schumacher College has an international reputation for its holistic and systems approach to sustainability. We have over nine acres of land integrating food production with beauty, biodiversity and quiet spaces for contemplation.

We adjoin Martin Crawford's 27 year old forest garden and are close to his research trials site. We are two miles from Totnes, home of the Transition Movement and are part of the historic Dartington Trust estate, with its beautiful listed gardens. We have an outstanding network of local horticulture projects, many of whom support the course with volunteering placements and opportunities for site visits.



### WHAT YOU WILL BE DOING

The course is designed to give participants the hands-on experience of how to run a small-scale market garden for a season. We teach a range of practical skills that will help equip you to grow organic annual vegetables in an agroecological way. This is largely through our 'learning-by-doing' approach, but also backed up with practical skill sessions,

classroom-based theory, trips to local growing projects, the chance to work alongside and learn from experienced growers, and time to study for projects and presentations.

In addition to the main veg growing activities, there are also opportunities to get a taste for alternative growing practices such as forest gardening and cut-flower production. We engage with the politics of food sovereignty and the socio-political backdrop of the regenerative agriculture movement, and also mark important seasonal events such as harvest time and May Day to help us engage spiritually with the land.

## HOW IT WORKS

The residency is full-time for 6 months including a 2 week break. Each week you can expect to be in the Schumacher gardens for up to 4 days helping grow and harvest local organic food in an ecologically sensitive way for the college community.

A typical week consists of

- 3 days practical work including a placement with a local project
- Half a day in the classroom or on trips
- Half a day for self-directed study

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8.30am	Morning Meeting				
9am	Harvest & Community Farm Work	Harvest & Community Farm Work	Harvest & Community Farm Work	Volunteer Placement	Harvest & Community Farm Work
10:30am	Tea Break				
11:15am-1pm	Practical Skill Session / Land Work	Theory Session	Agroforestry work	Volunteer Placement	Business Meeting
1pm	Lunch				
2pm	Landwork	Practical Skill Session / Land Work	Study Time	Volunteer Placement	Trip / Work Exchange
4:30pm	End of Day Meeting				

## LIFE ON CAMPUS

Integral to the College's international learning community, you will get to know students, staff and volunteers through daily meetings and shared activities. There is also a diverse programme of events and evening talks, offered by college residents, visiting teachers and local experts.

The college pedagogy rests on three foundations of Peer to Peer Learning; Whole Person Learning and Learning by Doing.



“An ounce of practice is generally worth more than a ton of theory.”

~E. F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*

“Growing food, like eating, is a community activity. The Growers network in Devon is a supportive community of passionate people who love to share their skills, knowledge and experience with others. We are proud to be part of that network, contributing to the health of the soil, diversity of ecology and provision of local, nutritious food.”

~ 2021 student

## COURSE CONTENT

Over 6 months you will be led through the following modules that cover the practical and theoretical grounding you will need to become an agroecological grower:

1	<b>Introduction to Agroecology</b>	2	<b>Preparing the Plot</b>
	This introductory module will introduce you to the theoretical concepts and guiding principles of agroecology, alongside a grounding in the practical skills that will take you through the next 6 months. You will get to know the Schumacher growing spaces and start to engage with core skills such as harvesting crops, seed sowing and the use of agricultural hand tools.		As the season gets underway we look at bed preparation, planting techniques and plant propagation methods. You will be introduced to covered crop care in the polytunnels, botany for food growers and permaculture design systems. In this module we also discuss the question of access to land.
3	<b>Maintaining Growing Spaces</b>	4	<b>Diversity in Growing</b>
	This module takes a deep dive into soil including composting, soil ecology, soil sampling, amendments and nutrition in farming systems, and prevention of pests & diseases through biodiversity.		We explore diversification in farming systems and growing spaces, discovering ways to add value by branching out from growing annual vegetables. We consider perennial food forests, fruit, cut flowers, integrated livestock, biodynamics and organic certification. This module also addresses the fight for land justice and the need for greater diversity on the land.
5	<b>Growing Cycles</b>	6	<b>Growers in the World</b>
	We take a look at how we can work with seasonal cycles and natural ecosystems to maintain and grow soil fertility, ensure quality harvests year after year, and encourage wildlife for pest and disease control. This includes investigating green manures, crop rotations, care of agroforestry trees, and inter-planting for beneficial insects. We will also discuss farming economics and ways of creating a financially sustainable growing project.		Growers in the World will explore macro and micro issues facing land workers across the world and closer to home. Within this module we will discuss land access issues, the job market, look ahead to the seasons to come, and most importantly, celebrate a successful and joyful season together.



## AGROECOLOGY TEACHERS

### COURSE LEAD

**Amy Cairns** (she/her)



Welcome to the Practical Residency in Agroecology! I'm Amy and have been growing and teaching at Schumacher College for two years. My passion for growing vegetables, fruits and flowers grew from both a life-long fascination with plants, and an urgent need to respond to social, political and environmental crises. When I first heard Satish Kumar's call to action in *Earth Pilgrim*, I knew I had to get my hands in the soil and become a peaceful activist like him. It seems fitting that I should finally end up tending the land at the college whose founder first inspired me to become a gardener.

I bring a wide range of experience from working on many different growing projects; running a community garden and urban horticulture course, providing veg boxes on a small-scale city market garden, leading mindful

gardening at a meditation retreat, studying ecological community food growing with The Wildlife Trusts, working at a National Trust ornamental garden, food growing for an off-grid restaurant, and a year on an organic flower farm.

### HEAD GROWER

**Harriet Knight** (she/her)

I grew up on an organic farm in North Devon. I left to study Oceanography at university and spent some time at sea. It didn't take long for the land life to call me back, and after studying a Permaculture design certificate, my passion for agroecology set in. I spent some years working on regenerative organic farms, in both hemispheres. Eventually I found myself working as a commercial organic veg grower, with a focus on incorporating the agroecological principals into commercial scale veg production.

Now as the Head Grower here at Schumacher I hope to keep exploring ways to grow food in a way that supports the natural world, whilst empowering others to do the same.



## APPLYING

Applications are open and available on the website

<https://www.dartington.org/event/practical-residency-in-agroecology/>

Fees are subject to change and are reviewed yearly. The fees for 2023 were:

**Residential: £8,400**

**Non-Residential: £5,400\***

Course fees include a stay in private accommodation with shared bathroom and all vegetarian meals from supper on the day of your arrival through until the lunchtime before your departure. Fee also includes any field trips, materials as well as all teaching sessions.

\*For students who already live locally and to enable us to take more students, it may be possible for you to live off-site. This would reduce your fees (to a price TBC). Please indicate if you would prefer this option. **This will only be possible for a small number of students.**

**Enquiries:** [schumacher.horticulture@schumachercollege.org.uk](mailto:schumacher.horticulture@schumachercollege.org.uk)

