



CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN

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For Immediate Release

Commissioner Daley, Sheriff Dart, Alderman Balcer, Chicago Botanic Garden and Archeworks to Celebrate Native Seed Garden in Bridgeport

--First of its kind in country

GLENCOE, Ill. (Oct.19, 2010) – Cook County Commissioner John P. Daley, Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart, Alderman James A. Balcer, Sophia Siskel, president and CEO of the Chicago Botanic Garden and Susanne Schnell, executive director of Archeworks, will celebrate a new native seed garden, located on 39th street between Union and Emerald. The Chicago Botanic Garden transformed a vacant lot in the neighborhood by planting 2,800 Midwest native prairie plants.

“We invite the community to join us as we celebrate this beautiful new garden,” said Commissioner Daley. The celebration is scheduled for Wednesday, October 27th from 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. at the native seed garden location.

The Bridgeport native seed garden is the first to have been planted in an urban setting, and is a collaboration among the Cook County Board of Commissioners, Alderman James A. Balcer, the Chicago Botanic Garden, the Cook County Boot Camp Program and Archeworks.

“We’re proud to have partnered on the native seed garden, and look forward to the Boot Camp participants maintaining it, and helping it thrive,” said Cook County Sheriff Thomas J. Dart. “This is a natural extension of the existing programs at the Boot Camp, particularly the vegetable farm, and it’s an example of how urban agriculture can be used both for sustainability, and as a valuable teaching tool.”

“Graduates of the Cook County Boot Camp program worked with us to install and build this garden and they will maintain the garden,” said Alderman Balcer.

The native seed garden is the first of several to be created in the Chicago area over the next three years. The project, spearheaded by the Chicago Botanic Garden, will test the viability of generating native seed stock to sell and market to urban farmers.

The \$149,998 grant, from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) allows for the creation of a pilot program to plant, maintain and harvest a total of one-acre of native seed gardens in the Chicago area over the next three years.

Training will be conducted through the Garden's Windy City Harvest Program. Chicago Botanic Garden conservation scientists will provide expertise for establishing native plant gardens in urban settings.

The Chicago Botanic Garden is the first botanic garden to create an urban prairie seed garden program. "We believe that this beautiful garden in Bridgeport will become a model program that other cities and botanic gardens will duplicate. While working with the Commissioner, the Alderman and Cook County Boot Camp, we will help plants, people and communities grow," said Sophia Siskel, president and CEO of the Chicago Botanic Garden.

Archeworks facilitated workshops with Cook County Bootcampers to get their perspective on the final design for the native seed farm. "The Bootcamp graduates who designed and built the new garden worked to reclaim and transform this idle space for Bridgeport residents," said Susanne Schnell, executive director of Archeworks, a post-graduate design school that provides innovative ecological design solutions to underserved communities.

Now in its third year, Windy City Harvest is an organic vegetable and plant production enterprise that provides college credit certification to fifteen to eighteen students annually through a nine-month classroom and hands-on training program in sustainable horticulture and urban agriculture. Headquartered at Arturo Velasquez Institute, students earn a certificate through City Colleges of Chicago.

In June 2009, with funding from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Chicago Botanic Garden and Cook County Boot Camp (CCBC) partnered to create a three-quarter-acre farm within the CCBC compound. The farm is one of the educational programs that serve inmates during their incarceration. Participants in the Boot Camp Garden grow, maintain, and learn about organic vegetable production. Vegetables are used in the mess hall and donated to local food pantries.

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Editors, please note: The Chicago Botanic Garden's newsroom is online at www.chicagobotanic.org/pr. For digital images, contact Julie McCaffrey at (847) 835-8213 or at jmccaffrey@chicagobotanic.org.

The Chicago Botanic Garden, one of the green treasures of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, is a 385-acre living plant museum featuring 24 distinct display gardens surrounded by lakes, as well as a prairie and woodlands. With events, programs and activities for all ages, the Garden is open every day of the year, except Dec. 25. Admission is free; select event fees apply. Parking is \$20 per car; free for Garden members. The Garden is located at 1000 Lake Cook Road in Glencoe, Ill. Visit www.chicagobotanic.org, or call (847) 835-5440 for seasonal hours, images of the Garden and commuter transportation information.

The Chicago Botanic Garden is managed by the Chicago Horticultural Society. It opened to the public in 1972 and is home to the Joseph Regenstein, Jr. School of the Chicago Botanic Garden, offering a broad array of adult classes in plant science, landscape design and gardening arts. Nearly 200 Garden scientists work on plant conservation, research and environmental initiatives that have local, regional and global impact. The Center for Teaching and Learning brings the wonder of nature and plants to children, teens and teachers with hundreds of summer camp, family and teacher training programs. The Garden's Horticultural Therapy and Community Gardening programs provide nationally recognized community outreach and service programs. The Garden is also breaking new ground in urban horticulture and jobs training through its Windy City Harvest program, which offers a certificate in Sustainable Horticulture and Urban Agriculture in cooperation with City Colleges of Chicago. The Chicago Botanic Garden is accredited by the American Association of Museums and is a member of the American Public Gardens Association (APGA). In 2006, the Chicago Botanic Garden received the Award for Garden Excellence, given yearly by the APGA and Horticulture magazine to a public garden that exemplifies the highest standards of horticultural practices and has shown a commitment to supporting and demonstrating best gardening practices.