FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Minnesota Commissioners of Agriculture and Education
Open School Yard Garden Conference Featuring John Fisher of LifeLab

Chaska, MN – Building on the strong response of last year’s Schoolyard Gardens Conference, the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, collaborating with the Schoolyard Garden Coalition and Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program, will present the second annual Schoolyard Gardens Conference: Cultivating the Future, Feb. 28, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Minnesota Commissioner of Education Brenda Cassellius and Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture Dave Frederickson will kick-off the event. Immanuel Jones, Director of Sustainability for Minneapolis Community and Technical College, will review the birth and growth of Eco-City Minnesota, an organization changing the way youth are perceived through gardening.

John Fisher, from LifeLab, a nationally recognized organization supporting school gardens around the nation with training, curriculum, and materials, will keynote the conference and present lessons learned in both practice and policy. He will describe national trends and research findings on the value of school gardens not only for the students, but for the entire school and its community.

Workshop presenters will address the challenges faced by teachers, principals, superintendents, food service professionals and parents, to create and sustain them.

“The conference is structured to offer an ideal setting in which schoolyard garden supporters can learn to use a garden as an outdoor, living laboratory for hands-on learning across the disciplines. In a schoolyard garden, you get the kids to engage all of their senses and educators get to bring learning concepts alive in a way that is not possible in any other setting,” says Tim Kenny, Minnesota Landscape Arboretum director of education.

Kenny adds, “A schoolyard garden appeals to numerous learning styles and it means that
teachers can connect learning standards in the most effective ways. I’ve watched it happen again and again, and at this conference participants will be able to engage with experts and others who have put these principles into action."

In addition to a day filled with plenary and interest-track sessions designed to help school gardeners reach the full potential of this educational asset, the conference offers an opportunity for current schoolyard garden champions to present their work in poster sessions.

This year’s conference features an “Answer Room,” where knowledgeable people and representatives from organizations will be on-hand to answer specific questions and talk about plants, curriculum, garden design, training opportunities, funding and other schoolyard garden resources.

Learn more and register at http://www.arboretum.umn.edu/2014ScholyardGardens.aspx. Conference tuition is $60 Arboretum members and conference affiliates, $70 general registration – discounts available for teams of three from the same school.