FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Watch 'em Grow! Schoolyard Gardens Conference Set for Feb. 27-28 at the Arboretum

Chanhassen, MN (Jan. 26, 2015) – Schoolyard gardens provide an incomparable, hands-on learning experience for youth and adults and an effective way to develop curriculum to meet academic standards.

Plus, studies show that exercise in outdoor, plant-rich environments fully engages the brain, strengthens muscles, boosts serotonin levels and helps focus the attention of young minds easily distracted in today’s busy lifestyle.

Building on the strong response to last year’s event, the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum will host the 2015 Schoolyard Gardens Conference on Friday and Saturday, Feb. 27 & 28. Subtitled “Everyone in the Garden,” this is a collaboration between the Arboretum, the Schoolyard Garden Coalition and Extension Master Gardener volunteer program. The conference will run from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday and 8:30 to 3:30 p.m. Saturday in the Oswald Visitor Center.

Whether you’re a beginner or a garden veteran, you can learn innovative strategies for building, sustaining and engaging everyone in a thriving schoolyard garden project.

“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 disciplines,” said Tim Kenny, Arboretum director of education. “In a schoolyard garden, kids engage all of their senses and educators bring learning concepts alive in a way not possible in other settings.”

“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,” Kenny continued.

Friday’s keynote speaker will be Arden Bucklin-Spreer, executive director of Education Outside. Drawing on more than 20 years of experience in developing school-based gardens, she will discuss how all curricula, from math to literature, can be enriched by using the garden as a central resource and not an additional feature.

Saturday’s keynote speaker, Dr. Jean Larson, manager of the U of M Nature-Based Therapeutics Services Program, will present the latest research demonstrating how exercise in an outdoor schoolyard garden doubles the benefits for children and helps them cope with the everyday stress of student life.

In addition to two days 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. The conference is geared to educators, volunteers, nutritionists, parents and all interested parties.

Learn more and register at http://www.arboretum.umn.edu/Schoolyards2015.aspx. Or call 612-301-1210. Conference tuition is $65 per day for Arboretum members and conference affiliates; $75 per day for general admission (includes lunch both days). Bundle and save with the two-day rate of $120 for Arboretum members and conference affiliates; and $140 for general admission.

The Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, the largest public garden in the Upper Midwest, is part of the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences at the University of Minnesota and a community and national resource for horticultural and environmental information, research and public education. It is located nine miles west of I-494 on Highway 5 in Chanhassen. —END—