



For Immediate Release
September 15, 2008

**Bronx Green-Up's Annual Harvest Festival
Celebrates Local Community Gardens**

**The New York Botanical Garden's Outreach Program
Marks Its 20th Year of Education and of Beautifying the Borough**

The New York Botanical Garden's Bronx Green-Up program, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, will hold its annual Harvest Festival on Saturday, September 20, from 1 to 5 p.m., rain or shine at the Padre Plaza Community Garden in the Bronx. Over 200 community members are expected to participate in this year's event, which honors community gardeners for their work during the season and gives them the opportunity to show off their harvests. The Bronx Green-Up (BGU) program has been developing a greener city since 1988, helping to transform vacant, abandoned lots into community gardens. Once established, Bronx Green-Up helps to support these gardens filled with food, flowers, and socialization to promote a better environment for neighborhood residents. Last year with the help of 1,000 hours of volunteer work, the program reached nearly 5,000 people representing more than 80 gardens and organizations.

Karen Washington, community gardener at Garden of Happiness, praised the impact of Bronx Green-Up. "My favorite part of the gardening process is the sense of community and the connection to the earth," she said. "Those are the two things that come up all the time when I speak to others about Bronx Green-Up. These community gardens have come a long way since they were empty lots. But there's still always more to do. In the beginning, a lot of community gardeners were focused solely on beautification and preservation. Preservation is still a key goal, but now we're also starting to look at food education and food security issues for the local community. Bronx Green-Up came here and helped us complete a landscaping project, helped us get supplies we desperately needed, helped us learn about composting and water harvesting and sustainability, helped us grow fruits and vegetables. Now we have a quiet oasis where the community can come together, where kids can play in a safe environment, where people can find a little peace in a green space they've had a hand in bringing to life. This is the fruit of everyone's labor."

The Harvest Festival offers music, great food (while supplies last), and fun for all ages. Some of the festivities this year include gardening demonstrations (with topics such as cooking, creating herbal teas, and making compost), music by DJ Remedy, face painting and other children's activities, table displays, and contests for best fruit or vegetable, best floral arrangement, and best community garden. Padre Plaza Community Garden is located at 283 St. Ann's Avenue at 139th Street and can be reached by the #6 subway to Brook Avenue/East 138th Street.

Ursula Chanse, The New York Botanical Garden's Director of Bronx Green-Up and Community Horticulture, has witnessed the program's positive impact over the years. "Along with bringing people of various ages and cultures together to work toward the betterment of their community," she said, "BGU provides design and landscape ideas, gardening advice, workshops, and supplies including seeds, bulbs, and plants. It helps Bronx residents, ranging from beginner to expert gardeners, to collaborate with government officials and New York City greening groups on projects like growing flowers, fruits, and vegetables; planting beds; and harvesting produce."

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As a community outreach program, Bronx Green-Up offers a number of activities throughout the year. For example, BGU's "Hortmobile" travels to area gardens carrying a community horticulturist who leads on-site demonstrations. Local experts and Botanical Garden staff share information about gardening in programs and events held at the Garden as well as at off-site locations. Workshops are offered on topics that include plant identification, butterfly gardening, and more. The Compost Project, in partnership with the New York City Department of Sanitation, provides education and outreach through its "Rotline," which provides callers with answers to their compost questions. The Harvest Festival rounds out the gardening season by enabling community gardeners from around the Bronx to meet each other, share information, and celebrate their successful harvests.

The New York Botanical Garden is an advocate for the plant kingdom. The Garden pursues its mission through its role as a museum of living plant collections arranged in gardens and landscapes across its National Historic Landmark site; through its comprehensive educational programs in horticulture and plant science; and through the wide-ranging research programs of the International Plant Science Center.

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Media Contacts: Nick Leshi 718.817.8658 or nleshi@nybg.org

Bronx Green-Up Contacts: Ursula Chanse 718.817.8023 or Katty Rivera 718.817.8021

At Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road, the Botanical Garden is easy to reach by Metro-North Railroad or subway. The Botanical Garden is open Tuesday through Sunday and Monday federal holidays. The Garden is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The best way to enjoy the Garden is with the *All-Garden Pass*, which includes admission to the grounds as well as to seasonal gardens, exhibitions, and attractions such as the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, Everett Children's Adventure Garden, Rock and Native Plant Gardens, and Tram Tour: \$20 for adults, \$18 for seniors and students with ID, \$7 for children ages 2-12, children under 2 are free. Grounds-only Admission is free Saturday mornings before noon and all day Wednesdays. For more information about Bronx Green-Up or The New York Botanical Garden, please call 718.817.8700 or visit our Web site at www.nybg.org

The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. A portion of the Garden's general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.