



Date: April 27, 2009

**NEW FLORAL CLOCK HIGHLIGHTS THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN**
View the Transient Display in St. Louis from May through October, 2009

(ST. LOUIS): In 1859, Englishman Henry Shaw established the Missouri Botanical Garden as a gift to his beloved City of St. Louis. In 2009, the Garden will mark its sesquicentennial with a monumental, floral tribute to both its Victorian and St. Louis roots. A custom-created, 20-foot-diameter, working **Floral Clock** will adorn the landscape from May through October. The horticultural endeavor will be on display adjacent to the Garden's historic reflecting pools, and is included with the cost of admission.

Floral clocks date back to the early 1900s, when they rose in popularity in England as a form of carpet bedding. The gardening style is achieved by placing small, colorful, low-growing plants in a variety of patterns or designs, similar to the look of Victorian carpet patterns. One of the most well-known floral clocks throughout history was located in St. Louis at the 1904 World's Fair.

"To know the history of the World's Fair floral clock, and to be able to create a new one for St. Louis, is incredibly exciting," said Jon Sweeney, a supervisor in the Garden's Horticulture Department and one of the project's organizers. "Plus, being a botanical garden, it's always great fun for us to envision and share new plant displays with our visitors."

Garden staff began preparation for the clock in the fall of 2007. They consulted with the local company Americlock, Inc., which specializes in multiple types of custom clocks and has past experience with floral clock construction. To allow for optimal viewing, the clock will be installed on an artificial, six-foot slope created with soil. The drive unit, or the mechanism that operates the

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ADD ONE: Sesquicentennial Floral Clock

clock's hands, will be located at the center of the clock's face in a large, stainless steel box. The clock's moving hands and Roman numerals, fabricated from stainless steel, are actually planters that will be filled with blooms throughout the spring and summer growing seasons.

The face of the clock will be adorned with approximately 5,000 to 8,000 individual plants, selected for their visual qualities as well as their dependable performance in the St. Louis region. To create the look of a perfect carpet, plants must be uniform in height (no taller than ten inches) with agreeable colors and textures. Horticulture staff will change the display once per season.

"The spring design was inspired from a look through a kaleidoscope that was simplified to fit the criteria of a carpet bedding display," said David Middleton, a Garden horticulturist charged with the Floral Clock design, planting and maintenance. To complement the pink and yellow tulips planted in nearby beds, the spring clock will feature a purple, lavender, pink, yellow and white palette of pansies, alyssum, and kale.

"Color was the most limiting factor for me in plant selection," said Middleton. "I am used to designing with color first, but it is not always possible to find the exact shade or tone that I want for my design while working within the display's parameters. And, as plants can perform differently from year to year, we must carefully research the dependability of each bedding plant we consider utilizing."

Summer's design was inspired by a doodle made by another staff horticulturist, Jennifer Mistretta. The sketch was tweaked to express a celestial theme. A deep purple will signify the night sky, with white for the moon, chartreuse and yellow for the sun, and a red background with green border. Summer plantings will include hemigraphis, begonias, alternanthera and dichondra.

To create the autumn design, Middleton shifted his usual "color first" design tactic, instead focusing on the cultural requirements of the plant material based on the season. The design will feature traditional fall colors such as yellows and oranges using mums and other seasonal selections.

Each seasonal change-out will take three staff members approximately one week to complete. Horticulturists will use tape measures to carefully plot the location of each plant in order to make the sketches and designs come to life as accurately as possible.

Maintenance of the living display differs from that of a traditional garden bed, and requires a creative and intensive approach. Some irrigation is built into the structure, but as the clock sits on an incline, staff have to carefully monitor so the top half does not become overly dry or the bottom half overly saturated. The 20-foot-diameter bed is 100-percent planted and has no stepping stones, so trained horticulture staff and volunteers must access the central plantings for pruning or weeding

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ADD TWO: Sesquicentennial Floral Clock

through the use of a slender, low-rise scaffold, stretched across portions of the clock face like a horizontal ladder. Watering, shearing, fertilizing, growth regulating and cleaning are all part of the daily routine to keep the clock in pristine condition.

“I know with the experience and dedication of our horticulture staff, the sesquicentennial clock will be a picture-worthy floral display,” said Middleton.

Adjacent to the 11 o’clock numeral, a five-foot-tall steel cuckoo bird house hides a life-sized bluebird replica, popping from his home to chirp on the quarter-hour. July 10 through 14, a festive red cardinal will replace the Missouri state bird, celebrating the 2009 Major League Baseball All-Star Game and FanFest in St. Louis. The design of the bird house was inspired by the cupola atop the roof of Tower Grove House, the Victorian country home of Garden founder Henry Shaw.

The working clock and cuckoo each require one-half ampere of electricity to operate. To offset this energy usage, the Garden will install a small solar array on an existing shade shelter within its Kemper Center for Home Gardening. A meter will be attached to the array to demonstrate actual electrical generation.

“By working with the existing, structurally-equipped shade structures within the Garden, we are able to add a solar offset with minimal aesthetic impact,” said Deborah Frank, vice president, Sustainability. “This offset also provides an excellent area for homeowner education about residential install options.”

The Missouri Botanical Garden Floral Clock will be located to the south of the central reflecting pool, just east of the Climatron® dome along the Garden’s central axis. The clock is viewable from the brick-lined pathway only; guests are not permitted to enter the display area. Visitors are welcome to take snapshots for their personal enjoyment, but are asked to take care to avoid blocking pathways at length with tripods and monopods.

Sneak an advance peek of the sesquicentennial Floral Clock as it is planted beginning in early April, then view the completed creation from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, May through October. See the Floral Clock also on special anniversary Garden Party Nights, 5 to 9 p.m. on Thursdays, Memorial Day through Labor Day. The temporary display will not be extended past 2009.

Support for the Floral Clock provided by Mr. and Mrs. William R. Orthwein, Jr.

Regular admission to the Missouri Botanical Garden is \$8; St. Louis City and County residents enjoy discounted admission of \$4 and free admission on Wednesday and Saturday mornings until noon (exception: Chinese Culture Days, Japanese Festival, and Best of Missouri

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ADD THREE: Sesquicentennial Floral Clock

Market weekends). Children ages 12 and under and Garden members are free. Summer Garden Party Nights are \$7 adults, \$3 children ages three to 12, and \$5 Garden members.

The Missouri Botanical Garden is located at 4344 Shaw Blvd. in south St. Louis, easily accessible from Interstate 44 at the Vandeventer exit. Free parking is available on-site and at two blocks west at the corner of Shaw and Vandeventer.

For general information, visit www.mobot.org or call the recorded event line at (314) 577-9400 or toll-free 1 (800) 642-8842.

The Missouri Botanical Garden is the oldest continually operating botanical garden in the nation, celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2009. Emerson is the presenting sponsor of the year-long sesquicentennial celebration, *Missouri Botanical Garden: Green for 150 Years*.

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NOTE: A digital color rendering is available as a .pdf file by request. Download other media materials at www.mobot.org/press.

The Missouri Botanical Garden's mission is "to discover and share knowledge about plants and their environment, in order to preserve and enrich life." Today, 150 years after opening, the Missouri Botanical Garden is a National Historic Landmark and a center for science, conservation, education and horticultural display. *Missouri Botanical Garden: Green for 150 Years*.

The Missouri Botanical Garden is located at 4344 Shaw Blvd. in St. Louis, just south of I-44 at Vandeventer-Kingshighway (exit #287B). Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day except Dec. 25. Grounds open at 7 a.m. every Wednesday and Saturday. Admission is \$8; free children ages 12 and under and Garden members. St. Louis City and County residents are \$4 and free every Wednesday and Saturday until noon (exception: special admission rate events). Park for free on site and two blocks west at the Shaw-Vandeventer intersection. The Garden is easily accessible by taking the MetroLink commuter rail line to the Central West End station and picking up a Metro bus (www.metrostlouis.org). For general information, log on to www.mobot.org or call the 24-hour recording at (314) 577-9400 or 1-800-642-8842. For membership information, call (314) 577-5118 during weekday business hours. For volunteer opportunities, call (314)-577-5187 or visit www.mobot.org/volunteer. The Missouri Botanical Garden is a tobacco-free environment.

(Note: A section of the I-64/U.S. 40 highway is under construction through 2009. Before traveling, check www.thenewi64.org for updates or visit www.GetAroundStL.com for other helpful information.)