



Date: May 13, 2009

**STUDENTS FROM BI-STATE REGION SHOWCASE THE EXCEPTIONAL
'POWER OF PLANTS' AT THE MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN**
Winning Contest Creations on Display through June 30

(ST. LOUIS): The Missouri Botanical Garden has announced the winners of its first-ever **“Power of Plants”** student contest. The contest challenged individuals and groups in kindergarten through twelfth grades to creatively tell the story of an amazing plant “superhero” through a two- or three-dimensional work of art. Over 350 entries were submitted by more than 500 students from Missouri and Illinois. All of the entries were unveiled and winners awarded savings bond or cash prizes at a private reception held May 12. The 17 winning entries will remain on public display 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily through June 30 at the Missouri Botanical Garden.

“It was so exciting to see how the unique characteristics and value of each plant type was creatively translated by students into meaningful sculptures, drawings, cartoons and poems,” said Deborah Frank, vice president of sustainability. “You truly get the sense that they understood and appreciated the importance of plants in our lives, which was the underlying goal of the contest.”

Lauren Epley from St. Francis of Assisi middle school in St. Louis was the recipient of a \$1,000 Grand Prize savings bond for her innovative spin on the vanilla bean plant. Epley transformed a used vanilla ice cream container into a three-dimensional figure sitting atop a bench, surrounded by factoids about the plant’s characteristics. The scene was enhanced with faux vanilla orchid flowers and a light vanilla scent.

“Lauren showed creativity in using recycled materials and appealing to multiple senses, making her entry stand out,” said “Power of Plants” contest coordinator Jessica Kester of the

(over)

ADD ONE: Power of Plants

Garden's Education Division.

Student entries were reviewed by a panel of ten judges representing the fields of art, education, research and conservation. Three judges were assigned to each age group. Savings bonds were awarded to individual winners and cash prizes were awarded to groups. First Prize was \$500; Second Prize, \$200; and Third Prize, \$100. Honorable mentions each received an award certificate and a living "powerful" plant of their own.

In the elementary school category, Warren Spinola from Mullanphy ILC in St. Louis took home First Prize for his individual entry featuring the cork tree. Spinola fashioned an 18-inch-tall model tree using paper maché, paint and construction paper. The model was accompanied by depictions of actual cork tree leaves, a summary of the plant's characteristics and a detailed bibliography of sources referenced. Matt Steffens from Telegraph Intermediate in Festus, Mo. won Second Prize for his alfalfa project, and homeschooler Cole Herman won Third Prize for his work on the burdock plant.

Group entries in the elementary school category included First Prize winners Sarah Schellenberg and Lukas Landmann from St. Richard School in St. Louis for their pitcher plant display, which combined three-dimensional model plants made from clay and yarn, two-dimensional drawings and written factoids. Harry Lindmark and Jon Beuhne from Villa Duchesne Oak Hill School in St. Louis won Second Prize for their cotton diorama, and J. Jacob Duever and Parker Durbin from St. John the Baptist-Gildehaus in Villa Ridge, Mo. won Third Prize for the gumplant.

In the middle school category, Annie Muehlfarth from St. Francis of Assisi School in St. Louis was awarded individual First Prize for her bromeliads entry. Muehlfarth used felt, popsicle sticks and paper to create a small model and authored a short essay. Jamie Weiss from St. Justin the Martyr in St. Louis received Second Prize for a sweet violet project, and Seva Perniciaro, also from St. Justin the Martyr, received Third Prize for a California redwood entry.

Also in the middle school category, Lizzy Driefuss, Molly Kramer and Molly Obert from St. Justin the Martyr took home group First Prize for their pomegranate tree entry. The students created a pomegranate tree drawing with construction paper, fashioned a clay model of a pomegranate fruit including skin, pulp and seeds, mounted a nutritional label and created question-and-answer fold-out trivia cards. Second Prize went to the Oakville Middle School Art 2 Class for their corn book. Each student contributed a different page about the plant, and the book cover was made from mashed corn.

(more)

ADD TWO: Power of Plants

In the high school category, Amanda Maragni from Warrenton High School in Warrington, Mo. won the individual First Prize for her creative chili pepper project. Maragni illustrated a cartoon character named Dr. Capsicum (the Latin name of the chili pepper), highlighting the health benefits of eating the plants. Second Prize was awarded to Megan Allen from Mississippi Valley Christian School in Alton, Ill. for her aloe vera entry, while Leslie Young from Wentzville Holt High School in Wentzville, Mo. and Martin Hill from Hermann High School in Hermann, Mo. tied for Third Prize with works on the *ipomea batatas* (sweet potato) and aloe vera, respectively.

“The entries in the ‘Power of Plants’ contest showcased a wide range of plants, and it is obvious that the students who participated really put effort forth in learning about the features of each, so that they could educate others,” said Kester. “They creatively expressed themselves in many different forms—written words, drawings, sculptures—which demonstrated their unique strengths, and shows that students can succeed no matter what their individual talent is.”

View the winning “Power of Plants” entries on display in the Jordan Education Wing, lower level of the Ridgway Visitor Center, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily through June 30. The display is included with Garden admission (\$8 adults; St. Louis City and County residents, \$4 adults and free on Wednesday and Saturday mornings until noon). Children ages 12 and under and Garden members are free.

The Missouri Botanical Garden is located at 4344 Shaw Blvd. in south St. Louis, easily accessible from Interstate 44 at the Vandeventer exit.

For general Garden information, visit www.mobot.org or call the recorded hotline at (314) 577-9400 or toll-free 1 (800) 642-8842. For more information about the Power of Plants contest, visit www.mobot.org/power.

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. *Missouri Botanical Garden: Green for 150 Years*.

#

NOTE: Digital color images available by request. Download 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.*