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For Immediate Release

**MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN RESEARCHER RECEIVES
HIGH HONORS FOR SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS**

(ST. LOUIS): Dr. Alan K. Graham, curator of paleobotany & palynology at the Missouri Botanical Garden has received the **Botanical Society of America's Merit Award** and the **Asa Gray Award from the American Society of Plant Taxonomists**. Graham received the lifetime achievement awards for his work on the origins and history of tropical vegetation.

The Merit Award is the Botanical Society's highest honor, which it awards to individuals who have demonstrated excellence and/or provided exceptional service to the botanical community in basic research, education, and public policy.

In honoring Graham with the Asa Gray Award, the American Society of Plant Taxonomists noted his extensive publications which include 118 scientific articles, two authored books, and two edited books.

During Graham's 50-year botanical career, he has become a major source of information on the evolution of the New World vegetation and the climatic and geologic events that have driven these changes. For 23 years, his research was sponsored through a series of nine grants from the National Science Foundation.

One of the most significant results of his contributions was to provide the first direct evidence that, in an area where rain forest is the dominant vegetation today – in lowland southeastern Mexico – rain forest was not present in the recent geologic past. This finding, published in *Evolution* in 1976, was in direct contrast to the paradigm of the day that the rain forest

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ADD ONE: Graham Awards

and its environments were stable throughout long intervals of geologic time. Correction of this misconception had many implications for the development of speciation models, and for demonstrating the delicately balanced, ephemeral nature of the rain forest and the need for conservation and sustainability efforts to protect its future.

“Through a lifetime of perceptive and careful study, Alan Graham has laid the foundations for our understanding of the history of vegetation in the Western Hemisphere during the past 75 million years,” said Peter H. Raven, president of the Missouri Botanical Garden. “Encouraging students and colleagues for several decades, he has greatly advanced the field of vegetation history, the basis of our understanding the past migrations of plants and animals in North and South America, their evolution, and the way in which we should understand their present distributions.”

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*.

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NOTE: A digital color image is 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*.

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.)