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What's growing on
at the Garden!

**MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN WORKS TO PRESERVE
THE WORLD'S SACRED SEEDS**
Network of Sanctuaries Preserve Biodiversity and Traditional Knowledge

(ST. LOUIS): Every day the Missouri Botanical Garden works to discover and share knowledge about plants and their environment in order to preserve and enrich life. In striving to fulfill that mission, the William L. Brown Center (WLBC) at the Missouri Botanical Garden is embarking on an effort to preserve biodiversity and traditional plant knowledge. The program, **Sacred Seeds**, is a network of living gardens around the world containing locally important plants, including those of medicinal, ceremonial, food crop, and craft value. The Sacred Seeds program is managed by the WLBC at the Missouri Botanical Garden and is supported by New Chapter Organics and Organic Gardening.

For millennia, medicinal herbs have sustained traditional societies. According to the World Health Organization, 80 percent of the population in developing countries relies on medicinal herbs to meet primary health-care needs. Medicinal herbs have also inspired many pharmaceuticals on which industrial societies rely. Over-harvesting, deforestation and global climate change threaten 70,000 plants known to be medicinal. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) calculates current extinction rates 100 to 1000 times higher than normally occurring in periods of evolutionary stability, which means the planet is in the midst of an unprecedented mass extinction event.

Also endangered are the languages and healing traditions of indigenous cultures. Anthropologists believe that every two weeks a language disappears, a traditional culture comes to an

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ADD ONE: Sacred Seeds

end, and the collective herbal wisdom of a people vanishes.

“Around the world we see more and more young people reluctant to learn their mother tongue, or to carry on the traditions of their elders, whether from internal or external forces,” said Ashley Glenn, Sacred Seeds program manager at the WLBC at the Missouri Botanical Garden. “When knowledge of medicinal plant use is lost, it is lost forever, discontinuing a legacy of healing and denying future generations the health and prosperity we hold.”

Sacred Seeds gardens are currently located in Luna Nueva, Costa Rica; Huamachuco, Peru; Madagascar; and the Missouri Botanical Garden. Plans are underway to break ground on a site in Crow Creek Reservation, S.D. Each Sacred Seeds site is chosen for its individuality. Depending on the circumstances of the local plants and people, the goal is to encourage and facilitate the growth of these sanctuaries based on the following ideas:

Plant Conservation: Researchers work with each sanctuary to explore all options to ensure the continuous presence of local plant resources.

Harboring Ancient Knowledge: To preserve cultural traditions, botanical information of useful plants is documented and available to the community in the local language.

A Venue for Creating and Sharing: Each sanctuary fosters discussions and encourages traditional practices, experimentation, education, conservation, and cultural celebration.

Sustainability through Practicality: Bringing economic benefits to the local community, researchers encourage the harvest and use of the cultivated plants for responsible income building.

Engagement of Local Communities: Local people are involved in every level of creation and management, and the sanctuary is a living testament to their history.

Emphasis on Education: Researchers work with each garden to create programs that focus on conservation education, home gardening, sustainable harvest practices, and the cultural history of plant use.

Constructive Communication: Sacred Seeds sanctuaries throughout the world share advice, questions, problems, and successes. This benefits each community, each ecosystem, and the world as a whole.

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ADD TWO: Sacred Seeds

The first Sacred Seeds garden, Santuario Semillas Sagradas, was created at Luna Nueva, an organic and Biodynamic® rainforest education center and lodge in Costa Rica. The sanctuary is a collection of medicinal plants that protects and celebrates not only biological diversity in Costa Rica and the tropics, but also the diversity of cultural knowledge related to these plants worldwide.

Santuario Semillas Sagradas is dedicated to protecting endangered medicinal plants of the neotropics and is one of the world's largest and most comprehensive sanctuaries for endangered plant species.

For more information about the Sacred Seeds program at the WLBC at the Missouri Botanical Garden, visit www.wlbcenter.org.

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NOTE: Digital 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, 151 years after opening, the Missouri Botanical Garden is a National Historic Landmark and a center for science, conservation, education and horticultural display.

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. Wednesdays and Saturdays (exception: special admission rate events). Admission is \$8; free children ages 12 and under and Garden members. St. Louis City and County residents are \$4 and free Wednesdays and Saturdays until noon (exception: special admission rate events - third weekend of May, Labor Day weekend, and first weekend of October). 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, visit www.mobot.org/membership call (314) 577-5118 during weekday business hours. For volunteer opportunities, visit www.mobot.org/volunteer or call (314) 577-5187. The Missouri Botanical Garden is a tobacco-free environment.