

## **Gardening Matters (formerly GardenWorks)**

### **Press Release**

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### **GardenWorks plants itself in new soil**

GardenWorks is taking on a new name: Gardening Matters. As of August 1, 2008, the group, which supports community gardening in Minnesota, will become an independent nonprofit organization in response to tremendous demand for its services. Gardening Matters will continue GardenWorks' commitment to supporting community gardening, and in addition, will be supporting greater food production in the Twin Cities metro area.

"Initially, our work was focused on existing community gardens," said executive director Kirsten Saylor, "but within the last 18 months we have been deluged by requests from individuals and community-based organizations for assistance in finding or starting a community garden. The vast majority of people are looking for space and opportunity to grow their own food. Today, most gardens are experiencing waiting lists, many for the first time. In the last six months alone, GardenWorks has received requests from 23 groups wanting to start a new community garden within the Twin Cities metro area and 100 people attended our How-to-Start-a-Community-Garden workshops.

The Gardening Matters Board met in late June to establish the new nonprofit corporation. "The biggest change is that, in addition to its function as an information hub for community gardeners, Gardening Matters will focus on establishing urban agriculture," Saylor added. "We will be able to develop programming that not only makes the Twin Cities more beautiful but also more fruitful as we work with backyard food producers and market garden growers."

"Interest in urban gardening is growing at a rapid rate," Saylor continued. "More consumers are concerned about the source and affordability of their food, while people of all backgrounds are showing interest in growing food commercially. Gardening Matters will link these two emerging trends for the community's benefit. We expect to help a new crop of urban growers supply fresh, delicious food to their neighbors by next summer. "

GardenWorks emerged in 2004 as a collaboration of the Green Institute, Farm in the City, and the Minnesota State Horticultural Society. The three groups developed a sustainability plan for community gardens, which called for the creation of a clearinghouse for community gardeners. The Green Institute offered to host the effort until it could stand on its own.

"I can't thank the Green Institute enough for their support," Saylor added. "The Green Institute's physical and organizational support gave us the foundation we needed to become a significant resource for community gardening in the metro area."

Gardening Matters will continue to maintain its informational website with an online directory of community gardens, and will answer questions from the general public about community gardening. It sponsors two main events each year: the Community Garden Spring Resource Fair (which drew 500 people in March 2008) and the Parade of Community Gardens. This year's Parade of Community Gardens on August 16<sup>th</sup> (10-2pm) will feature 45 community gardens across Minneapolis and St. Paul as well as Mankato, Northfield and Stillwater. Visit [www.gardenworksMN.org](http://www.gardenworksMN.org) later this month for event details and to download a brochure about participating gardens.

Until the transition is complete, Gardening Matters will continue to operate from the offices of the Green Institute at 2801 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue South in Minneapolis through September 2008. Updates will be posted on the GardenWorks website: [www.gardenworksMN.org](http://www.gardenworksMN.org).