



Chicago Urban Horticulture Foundation

541 North Fairbanks Court, 7th Floor

312/742.4300 (phone) 312/742.5276 (fax)

News Release



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Contact: **Gabrielle Lyon, 773.834.7614**

SuperCroc's Garden Gives Visitors an Ancient View on New Buds

Visitors to the 2003 Chicago Flower and Garden Show will get a glimpse of a dinosaur-age plant world when Project Exploration unveils its "Mesozoic Garden" at the Chicago Flower & Garden Show Mayor's Preview Night event on March 7th, the kick-off fundraiser for the new Chicago Urban Horticultural Foundation. An interactive webgarden can be viewed online www.projectexploration.org/garden.

The prehistoric garden features SuperCroc, a forty-foot-long, dinosaur-eating crocodile crouching on the bank of the river protecting a nest of hatchlings. Surrounding the ancient reptile is a natural progression of mosses, horsetails, cycads, ferns, palms, conifers, water lilies and blooming magnolias. The "Mesozoic Garden" recreates a primeval riverbank as it might have appeared during the age of the dinosaurs. A dense, green, misty environment is home to bubbling water, sounds of insects and amphibians – and the largest crocodile that ever lived. Project Exploration's "Mesozoic Garden" uses only plants that were alive during the time of the dinosaurs and flowering plants that emerged at the end of the dinosaur era.

"The Mesozoic Garden includes representatives from all plant groups alive at the time of the dinosaurs, including mosses, horsetails, cycads, ferns, tree ferns, palms, ginkos, blooming magnolias and conifers. Only by bringing together plants from disparate corners of the globe and a variety of environments can we recreate a dinosaur-age scene... a scene SuperCroc might have laid eyes on," explains University of Chicago professor, and garden co-creator, Dr. Paul Sereno.

"Inviting Project Exploration to participate in the Flower & Garden Show is a great opportunity to encourage people to think beyond their modern day garden, and spark an interest in the idea of the evolution of plants and gardens," said Chicago Urban Horticultural Foundation Board Member Donna LaPietra. "We embrace the mission of Project Exploration to engage all of us in the fascination of the world around us and using such creative means that we don't realize what we're really doing is learning science."

Some of the plants, like the *Ginkgo*, look virtually identical to closely related species that lived millions of years ago. Some of the plants, like *Araucaria*, were the dominant trees of the forest in their day.... 100 million years ago. The Mesozoic Garden includes a 135-million year old fossil tree trunk of *Araucaria* that weighs approximately 400 pounds and was discovered in Africa's Sahara Desert.

"Project Exploration was thrilled when the Chicago Urban Horticultural Foundation invited us to design a garden. Our mission is to make science come alive – what better way for us to do that than by bringing living and fossil worlds together?" said Executive Director, and garden co-designer Gabrielle Lyon.

The 2003 Chicago Flower and Garden Show will be held March 8-16th at Navy Pier. For more information about the Show, call 312.742.PLAY.

Project Exploration's dinosaurs will leave their prints at Garfield Park Conservatory, 300 N. Central Park Ave., when GIANTS comes to the Westside hothouse in December 2003.

Project Exploration is a Chicago-based non-profit science education organization. Co-founded in 1999 by University of Chicago paleontologist Dr. Paul Sereno and Executive Director Gabrielle Lyon, Project Exploration is dedicated to making science accessible to the public – especially city kids and girls. For more information log on www.projectexploration.org. **Project Exploration's Garden Partners: Apex Landscaping; the Chicago Park District, Bukiety, and Personal Spaces; paleobotanist Caroline Stromberg** of the University of California, Berkeley.