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**For Immediate Release**

**Plant Yourself in Sweet New Exhibit!**

*“Sugar from the Sun” Opens March 1, Garfield Park Conservatory*

**CHICAGO (Jan. 29, 2008)** – Immerse yourself in the world of plants as they take in and use air, water and sunlight to make sugar-energy inside every leaf at “Sugar from the Sun,” a ground-breaking permanent exhibit opening March 1 at Garfield Park Conservatory, 300 N. Central Park Ave., Chicago.

Using plants, water features, tons of stone and innovative sound and lighting technologies, the living exhibit tells the story of how plants grow and ultimately provide everything we need to live. Shaded by curtains of vanilla bean plants, then walking “on air” and through towers of gnarled roots, or inhaling the sweet scent of flowers, visitors will embark on a sensory experience that inspires them to learn more about the widely misunderstood process of photosynthesis.

“The Conservatory is an unusual blend of museum, garden, science center and cultural institution, which makes us uniquely positioned to present this difficult topic in novel and experiential ways that are interesting to visitors of all ages,” David Snyder, director of educational exhibits, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance. “When you step into ‘Sugar from the Sun,’ you won’t see strong scientific words, traditional museum signage or an overwhelming amount of language. What you will experience are four exotic botanical environments that instill wonder and start conversations about the importance of plants to all life on earth.”

“Sugar from the Sun” is a highlight of “Chicagoasis: The Greenest Show on Earth” – a year-long celebration of the Conservatory’s 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2008. A series of centennial events and programs are planned to honor the world’s largest botanical collection under glass, designed on Chicago’s West Side by renowned landscape architect Jens Jensen.

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## **“Sugar from the Sun”//Add One**

“Sugar from the Sun” will open in the Conservatory’s former Sweet House, a 6,240-square-foot greenhouse dramatically renovated with new pathways, updated lighting, and electrical and irrigation systems that support the exhibit’s living and fabricated elements. The \$2.7 million exhibit and \$2.2 million Sweet House rehabilitation project have been more than four years in the making and have involved dozens of Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance staff, Chicago Park District staff, horticulturists, museum educators, architects and exhibit designers.

The non-linear layout of “Sugar from the Sun” provides multiple navigational possibilities, echoing the experience of meandering through nature. Pathways bend and wind through each section of the exhibit, providing new “aha” moments around each corner. Sculptural highlights include: a 38 foot long, 10 foot high water feature; 200 tons of hand-picked stones; four 13-foot-tall planters; eight 14-foot-tall steel trees; and nearly one mile of sound cable. A total of 3,900 linear feet of bent steel will interact with and support the lush green foliage of 1,850 plants, including mature cinnamon, macadamia nut, chewing gum and black sapote trees transplanted from the former Sweet House.

One of the exhibit’s four main areas is devoted to sugar – or energy, the product of photosynthesis. Here, visitors are surrounded by the Conservatory’s fruiting plants, including bananas, mangoes, papayas and oranges. Three additional areas feature the building blocks of photosynthesis – air, water and sunlight – and show how plants use these elements to produce energy within their leaves. Water falls, mist and reflective pools demonstrate the many forms of water. In the sunlight area, visitors go “underground” (beneath a plant dome) to experience first-hand how leaves absorb sunlight. Steel trees planted with hundreds of epiphytes sway slightly throughout the exhibit’s air section.

Interpretive highlights include sound that moves along pathways using a new technology, lighting that reacts to changing natural light conditions, illuminated signage integrated into exhibit features and plantings, and a decorative floor treatment that replicates natural environments.

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## “Sugar from the Sun”//Add Two

The exhibit directly supports national science learning standards at the fifth through eighth grade levels, but also speaks to a much broader audience of families, students and teachers. Visitors are engaged on a basic human level through content that is accessible and meaningful for a diverse audience.

Families are invited to pick up exhibit guides and supplemental rental materials with information for deeper exploration into the exhibit’s educational features. Take-home materials encourage families to explore the air, water, sunlight, leaves and roots in their own back yards and on their window sills, and to connect the food production of plants to common products they find in their refrigerators and on store shelves. Studies show that children remember and learn about nature better when they interact with a caring adult.

“Sugar from the Sun” is made possible in part by a \$1.65 million grant from the National Science Foundation. Support also has been received from the “Public Museum Capital Grants Program” of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Illinois State Museum.

Admission to “Sugar from the Sun” is free. Owned by the Chicago Park District and operated in partnership with the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, the Conservatory is open every day of the year, with free admission and convenient free parking. (Special exhibit and activity fees may apply.) For information about Garfield Park Conservatory’s Centennial and related programming, call 773-638-1766 extension 13, or visit [www.garfieldconservatory.org](http://www.garfieldconservatory.org).

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*Garfield Park Conservatory turns 100 years old in 2008, celebrating its heritage as one of the world’s largest botanical gardens under glass. Owned by the Chicago Park District and operated in partnership with the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, the innovative horticultural masterpiece was designed by renowned landscape architect Jens Jensen. Many activities and programs are planned to commemorate this Centennial. For the latest information, call the Alliance at 773-638-1766 ext. 13 or visit [www.garfieldconservatory.org](http://www.garfieldconservatory.org).*

