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THE “POLLINATORS IN PARKS” INITIATIVE TAKES ROOT IN FIVE CITY OF ATLANTA PARKS

Phase Two of the Initiative’s Completion Brings Multiple Benefits to the Community

Atlanta, GA, May 31, 2017 – [Park Pride](#) and [Atlanta Botanical Garden](#), in collaboration with local community gardening groups, completed the installation of five pollinator gardens in City of Atlanta parks. These gardens, which are part of the “Pollinators in Parks” initiative funded by The Home Depot Foundation through the Community Building Network, are intended to improve Atlanta’s long-term biodiversity, ecological health and sustainability. This installation marks the completion of phase two of the four-phase plan to create thriving pollinator habitats and help inform the broader community about the benefits of pollinators.

During phase one, representatives from the five participating community gardens—Blue Heron Nature Preserve, Four Corners Park, Gilliam Park, Grove Park and Welch Street Park—met with landscape architects from Park Pride and pollinator experts from the Atlanta Botanical Garden to develop the layouts for the pollinator gardens specific to the needs of each site, ensuring a healthy habitat all year long.

Teri Nye, Park Pride’s Visioning Coordinator and botanist with expertise in Georgia’s native plants, stated, “Starting with a planting plan and a ‘menu’ of host and nectar plants ensures that each garden has a seasonal succession of food for our native pollinators during all stages of their lifecycles.”

Volunteers from each community joined Park Pride and Atlanta Botanical Garden staff in April to install over 350 native pollinator plants across the five gardens.

These pollinator gardens, however, are not just great for the bees, butterflies, birds and other insect pollinators that they support. They will also provide direct benefits to the community by supporting the adjacent vegetable gardens that already exist in these neighborhood parks. “There is evidence that even small patches of native flowering plants adjacent to agricultural landscapes increase yield and quality of crops,” explained Melina Lozano Durán, Pollinator Garden Coordinator with the Atlanta Botanical Garden. “For example, vegetables like tomatoes, cucumbers and zucchini, and fruits like cantaloupe and blueberries, just to mention a few, will be more full, more colorful and taste better thanks to the pollination from insects that were attracted to the nearby flowers.”

Urban Greenscapes has been hired to maintain the pollinator gardens over the first growing year. A landscape company created by a cohort from the Greening Youth Foundation with training provided by The Conservation Fund and the Atlanta Botanical Garden, Urban Greenscapes are currently preparing their weeding and watering schedule to cover the hot summer months.

Next year, maintenance responsibilities will return to the community members at each garden. Trainings focused on maintenance planning and pollinator education are being conducted to ensure the continued success and growth of each of the gardens.

Education beyond the gardens is an additional focus of the “Pollinators in Parks” initiative, and gardeners are organizing educational opportunities for those in the surrounding community. The West Atlanta Watershed Alliance, for instance, will host a STEM event at Grove Park pollinator garden, and the Four Corners community garden is hosting elementary school students from the Children’s Defense Fund Freedom School where they will learn more about pollinators, pollination and plant identification. Additionally, Blue Heron Nature Preserve will incorporate their pollinator garden into existing educational programming. “We hope that by showing our visitors how beautiful and effective native

flowering plants can be, it will encourage them to plant their own pollinator garden at home,” stated Brooke Vacovsky, Blue Heron’s Project and Operations Manager.

“Giving back in our hometown of Atlanta is a priority for The Home Depot,” says Catherine Stodola, Atlanta Giving, The Home Depot Foundation. “We find the most success when our partners collaborate in unique ways. We’re proud to fund the collaboration between Park Pride and the Atlanta Botanical Garden and are delighted with the results.”

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About The Home Depot Foundation:

Since the first The Home Depot store opened in 1979, giving back has been a core value for the Company and a passion for its associates. Today, The Home Depot, in partnership with The Home Depot Foundation, focuses its philanthropic efforts on improving the homes and lives of U.S. military veterans and their families and aiding communities affected by natural disasters. Through Team Depot, the Company’s associate-led volunteer force, thousands of associates dedicate their time and talents to these efforts in the communities where they live and work.

Since 2011, The Home Depot Foundation has invested more than \$184 million in veteran causes, and along with the help of Team Depot volunteers, has transformed more than 30,000 homes and facilities for veterans. To learn more and see Team Depot in action, visit www.homedepot.com/teamdepot.

About Park Pride:

Park Pride is the Atlanta-based nonprofit that engages communities to activate the power of parks. Working with 90 local Friends of the Park groups, Park Pride provides leadership and services to help communities realize their dreams for neighborhood parks that support healthy people, strong neighborhoods, vibrant business districts, a robust economy and a healthy environment. Park Pride is active in greenspace advocacy and educating both civic leaders and the general public about the benefits of parks, and annually hosts the Parks and Greenspace Conference. Learn more about Park Pride at www.parkpride.org.

About Atlanta Botanical Garden:

The mission of the Atlanta Botanical Garden is to develop and maintain plant collections for display, education, research, conservation, and enjoyment. The Garden is located at 1345 Piedmont Ave. NE and open November through March from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday and from April through October from 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. Admission is \$21.95 adults, \$15.95 children 3-12, free to children under 3 and Garden members. For more information, visit atlantabg.org or phone 404-876-5859.