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MID-SOUTH NATIVE PLANT CONFERENCE RETURNS TO MEMPHIS
Time Magazine's "Hero for the Planet" Dr. Peter Raven speaks at Dixon in October

(Memphis, TN – June 23, 2010) After a 13-year hiatus, Dixon Gallery & Gardens will host the **Mid-South Native Plant Conference: Natives and Beyond: Sustainable Plants, Gardens and Communities** on **October 8 through October 10, 2010**. This year's conference brings a world-class roster of nationally acclaimed horticulturalists, botanists, and other environmental experts to Memphis.

"We have revived the conference to address how native plants can be used in an aesthetically pleasing way to mitigate environmental problems, create a local identity, and become an important part of a sustainable future," says Dixon's Director of Horticulture, Dale Skaggs. The purpose of the 2010 native plant conference is to promote awareness of the use of plant choices, horticultural practices and garden designs that work with nature and have a positive environmental impact. Attendees will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in sessions with world-class speakers who will provide the tools necessary for safe and ecological gardening to increase their own sustainability.

On the evening of October 8, acclaimed garden author and syndicated columnist **Felder Rushing** will be kicking off the event. A 10th generation gardener from Jackson, Mississippi, as well as a former Extension Service urban horticulture specialist, Felder has been highly praised for his radio show, *The Gestalt Gardner*, numerous newspaper columns, and award-winning books. His lecture "How to Get Away with Growing Wildflowers in Town" Friday evening will be accompanied by optional tours of the Dixon gardens, including the recently redesigned shade gardens.

Saturday, October 9, will be a day filled with distinguished speakers, many of whom are new to the Memphis area. Among these is the key-note speaker, **Dr. Peter H. Raven**, a prominent botanist and supporter of conservation who is termed by *Time* magazine as a "Hero for the Planet." Dr. Raven recently retired from a 39-year commitment as Director of the Missouri Botanical Garden, where he was named President Emeritus and George Engelmann Professor of Botany at Washington University in St. Louis. Recipient of the National Medal of Science – the most prestigious award for scientific achievement in the United States – in 2001, this nationally recognized expert has written several popular and scientific books alike, including *Biology of Plants* and *Environment*. Dr. Raven will speak on "How Many Plant Species Will Survive in the 21st Century: The Role of Gardens" and will be followed by garden designer and photographer **Cole Colston Burrell**.

Burrell, an award-winning author and teacher, is known for his cultivation of hellebore species, hybrids, and natives in his garden near Charlottesville, West Virginia. He holds masters degrees in horticulture and landscape architecture from the University of Minnesota and is currently a lecturer at the College of Landscape Architecture at the University of Virginia and principal of Native Design Landscape and Restoration. In addition, Cole has won the American Horticulture Society book award in both 1998 and 2007 for *A Gardener's Encyclopedia of Wildflowers* and *Hellebores: A Comprehensive Guide*, respectively. This international lecturer on design, plants, and ecology will enlighten audiences with his talk "Great Natives for Tough Places."

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Following a break will be a lecture by environmental educator **Ann English**. She is the Planning Specialist for RainScapes program with the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, as well as a member in the Sustainable Landscape Design Program at George Washington University. Interested primarily in the research of sustainable learning environments, planting design, and low maintenance strategies, Ann promotes ecological innovations, such as green roofs, dry wells and conservation landscaping. She was named a semi-finalist for the 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award for collaboration with Comcast and the Maryland State Department of Education. Ann will share her knowledge and research findings on ecological solutions in her talk "Storm Water Landscapes: Rain Gardens and Other Strategies for Improving Water Quality."

Rick Lewandowski, director of Mt. Cuba Center in Greenville, Delaware since 1999, promotes the institution's mission to promote better native plants for landscaping by heading institutional planning and garden development - including conservation, education and research programs. Before his involvement with the Center, Rick worked with the Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania for 16 years, serving as Director of Horticulture and Curator of the Living Collection his last 8 years. This traveler and researcher will lecture on "Nurturing Gardens Inspired by Nature," inspired by his numerous exploration trips to China where he developed and oversaw research for the Morris Arboretum.

Co-author of *Dogwoods: The Genus Cornus*, **Don Shadow** will conclude the series of talks on Saturday, October 9. Receiving his degree in Horticulture from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Don is a fourth generation nurseryman heavily involved in horticulture associations, such as the Southern Nursery Association, where he formerly served as President, the International Plant Propagator's Society, Tennessee Nurserymen's Association, American Association of Nurserymen Board of Governors, and the Advisory Council of the United States National Arboretum. He was recently inducted into the Tennessee Nursery & Landscape Association Hall of Fame in 2008 and has received other numerous awards and honors. Don's "New and Useful Native Plants for Mid-South Gardens" lecture will close Saturday's events.

An optional guided field trip through Overton Park's Old Forest and private garden tours will be offered on Sunday, October 10.

Conference cost is \$100 with registration prior to September 1, 2010. After this date, a fee of \$125 includes access to light evening refreshments, continental breakfast, box lunch and on-site vendor access.

For registration, call (901)761-5250; for additional details, see the Event Calendar at www.dixon.org.