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Green Spaces Reduce Crime, Road Rage and Enhance Mood

Landscape Ontario compiles research on social benefits of Green Spaces

Milton, ON – August 11, 2009 – The benefits of natural and landscaped green spaces are not just limited to the environment, say officials at Landscape Ontario. According to research gathered by the not-for-profit organization, green spaces can improve children's self-esteem, lower crime rates, increase mood, encourage social interaction and even reduce road rage. The research was originally compiled for Landscape Ontario's website, and provides proof that green spaces not only make communities look better, but feel better as well.

The following are a few of the research highlights on the benefits of green spaces compiled by Landscape Ontario:

- **Lowers Crime and Enhances Self-esteem:** A 30 year study conducted by researchers at Morton Arboretum revealed when landscaping projects are promoted in communities, neighbourhoods, housing projects and prisons, self esteem increases and vandalism decreases.
- **Beneficial to Children:** Green spaces can boost children's attentional resources and, "green spaces may enable children to think more clearly and cope more effectively with life's stress," according to a study published in Environment and Behavior.
- **Create Communities:** "Green spaces are gathering places that create close-knit communities and improve well-being—and in doing so, they increase safety", according to studies conducted by the Human Environment Research Laboratory at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Another study conducted at a Chicago public housing development revealed similar results. Residents of buildings with more trees and grass reported that they knew their neighbors better, socialized with them more often, had stronger feelings of community and felt safer and better adjusted than did residents of more barren, but otherwise identical buildings.
- **Road Rage Reduction:** A University of Washington study has revealed road rage may be less likely to occur when nature is in view. The "immunization effect" reveals the degree of negative response to a stressful experience is less if a view of nature preceded the stressful situation.
- **Enhances Mood:** Gardening and yard work contribute to healthy, active living both physically and emotionally. Horticulture therapists have discovered that gardening provides a form of emotional expression and release, and it helps people connect with others.

"It's common knowledge that planting trees and creating green spaces is good for the environment," said Denis Flanagan of Landscape Ontario. "We wanted to inform people of the little known social benefits of 'greening' in hopes it will encourage residents to create more green spaces and in turn, better communities."

Full research studies and bibliographies are available on the Landscape Ontario website at www.landscapeontario.com

Landscape Ontario is the largest horticultural trade association in North America with more than 2,300 members. Its mission is to be the leader in representing, promoting and fostering a favourable environment for the advancement of the horticultural industry in Ontario.

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