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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Awards Honor Commitment to Community Gardening in Boston**

*Four awards given during sixth annual awards ceremony during Gardeners Gathering*

**BOSTON, MA – April 9, 2008** – There are 150 community gardens in the city of Boston, and within those gardens are people who make cultivating community gardening special and rewarding. To honor individuals and the gardens they tend, Boston Natural Areas Network, with the help of Mayor Thomas M. Menino, presented the sixth annual Community Garden Awards at the recent 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Gardeners Gathering held at Northeastern University.

South End resident Eleanor Strong was honored with the 2008 *Most Valuable Gardener Award* for her long time, outstanding service to the Rutland Washington Community Garden located at Rutland and Washington Streets where she has tended a plot since 1970. Strong is known as a visionary who taught her fellow gardeners the benefits of composting, conserving water, and using native plants long before it was fashionable. Committed to community gardening, Strong, age 87, has attended all 33 Gardeners Gatherings, often arriving by bicycle.

East Boston's Bremen Street Community Garden, located at the new Bremen Street Park, was honored as the 2008 Community Garden *Rookie of the Year* for the outstanding effort of the neighborhood in its inaugural gardening year. This new garden was established by neighborhood volunteers who organized a garden for 40 gardeners in July 2007, formed a group, and filled all garden plots. By September, they enjoyed a bountiful harvest.

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The Richard D. Parker Memorial Victory Garden, located at Boylston Street and Park Drive in the Fenway was named to the 2008 Community Garden Awards *Hall of Fame* by Boston Natural Areas Network for having the distinction as the oldest continuously active victory garden in the country, dating back to World War II. The garden's history explains that Victory Gardens were created as demands for food exports to the nation's armed forces in Europe and the Pacific caused rationing and shortages for those back home in the States. In response, President Roosevelt called for Americans to grow more vegetables. The City of Boston established 49 areas (including the Boston Common and the Public Gardens) as "victory gardens" for citizens to grow vegetables and herbs.

A special Hall of Fame award was given posthumously to John Carroll who passed away in November. Carroll was a gardener who initiated the Minton Stables Community Garden in Jamaica Plain, and later added his green thumb to the Southwest Corridor Community Farm. He was known as a teacher and philosopher and was a friend to many gardeners.

"Community gardening in Boston is thriving because of the people who persevere to create something beautiful, tangible and rewarding in their neighborhoods," said Valerie Burns, BNAN president, "The Community Garden Awards are an expression of gratitude for making Boston a greener and more sustainable city."

Boston Natural Areas Network is a non-profit organization dedicated to bringing together local residents, partner organizations, public officials and foundations to preserve, expand and enhance urban open space, including community gardens, greenways and urban wilds. For more information about the organization, becoming a member or the calendar of events, visit [www.bostonnatural.org](http://www.bostonnatural.org) or call 617-542-7696.

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