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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Boston Natural Areas Network to create largest community garden in Dorchester

New Dorchester Garden Council to launch

BOSTON, MA – February 24, 2011 – Boston Natural Areas Network (BNAN) has broken ground at the Nightingale Community Garden which, when completed, will be the largest community garden in Dorchester -1.5 acres. Once the site of the former BPS Florence Nightingale School at 512 Park Street and long gardened by a small group of residents, the garden was acquired by BNAN in 2006 as a permanent community garden and plans were developed to build out the site to its full potential. The first phase of work began this week with the demolition and removal of asphalt. Once the site is cleared, soil improvement will begin, followed by construction of the new garden in April.

When completed in June 2011, the Nightingale Garden will have 125 garden plots, 12 accessible raised bed gardens and an orchard. The new garden will be fully accessible, attractive and productive with healthy soil, path system, complete water system and a common gathering area with gazebo, benches and tables. Gardeners and residents envision the new garden as the Dorchester center for growing and learning about cultivating healthy fresh food.

The Nightingale Garden project is part of BNAN's Boston Is Growing Gardens (BIGG) program which aims to double the community garden food growing capacity in Dorchester and increase opportunities for access to healthy food and physical activity for many residents. Working with our partners, the City of Boston, Dorchester Environmental Health Coalition, gardeners, neighbors and local health organizations, BNAN is undertaking a two-fold increase in the number of plots (from 249 to 251) in the 17 Dorchester Community Gardens owned by BNAN, in addition to building new gardens.

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Grantley Payne, a Dorchester resident, is the BIGG project manager. Joining BNAN in January, Payne is doing extensive outreach in Dorchester neighborhoods to raise awareness of the availability and benefits of community gardening among residents. Payne has promoted BIGG and community gardening at community organizations and neighborhood associations including: Codman Square Health Council, Bowdoin Street Health Center, Uphams Corner Health Center, Dynamic Seniors in Action, Fit-4-Life at Kit Clark, Eat Green Save Green, BU IMPACT, Codman Square Neighborhood Association, 5 Streets Association, Hancock Street Civic Association, and Torrey Street Association. As a result, new dialogue and interest in community gardening has been generated among program participants and residents in Dorchester.

As community gardening gains momentum with the renovation of the Nightingale Community Garden, BNAN hopes to propel this movement forward with the formation of the Dorchester Garden Council, the first neighborhood garden council in the city. The Council of gardeners and garden supporters, which will be staffed by BNAN, will be a local clearinghouse of support and ideas to expand gardening in Dorchester, connecting to residents, local groups and institutions and programs serving all ages. The Council will advise on the development of new and existing Dorchester gardens; will help recruit and network to connect new gardeners to available plots and will help to generate ideas and coordinate garden based events intended to promote nutritional and physical well-being as well as community building. The initial council meeting will be open to the general public and will take place on Tuesday, March 1 at 6pm at 450 Washington Street in Codman Square.

If you would like to learn more about BIGG, the garden council, or how to get involved in community gardening in your Dorchester neighborhood, please contact BNAN at info@bostonnatural.org or call the BIGG Project Manager Grantley Payne at 617-542-7696 x21.

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 or call 617-542-7696.

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