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Phipps Executive Director Richard Piacentini Receives Prestigious American Public Garden Association Service Award

Innovative Pittsburgh leader honored Thursday at national conference.

Pittsburgh, Pa. – Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens Executive Director **Richard Piacentini** received special recognition Thurs., June 23, 2011 when he was honored with the American Public Garden Association (APGA) Service Award at the organization's national conference in Philadelphia, Pa. This prestigious award, given annually since 2004, recognizes the contributions of one dedicated individual who has gone above and beyond to position public gardens as a force for positive change while in the service of APGA.

As a former president and treasurer of APGA, the premier public garden association in North America with 500 member institutions in 50 states, Piacentini has provided a wealth of volunteer leadership to the professional organization through the years. Currently the chair of its Green Buildings and Landscapes Committee, he travels extensively to speak about sustainable design and operations for public gardens, sharing his innovative vision and expertise to inspire and help professionals and others across the country to "go green."

"The APGA is an invaluable resource for public garden professionals everywhere, giving them the knowledge, guidance and support they need to better serve their visitors and members, and foster a deeper appreciation of the natural world," says Richard Piacentini. "I am grateful to have received the association's Service Award this year while working together with them to advance the important work of reconnecting people with plants. I would like to thank the Phipps board of directors and staff, as well as my family, for making all of this possible, too."

At home in Pittsburgh, Piacentini has served as executive director of Phipps since 1994. During his tenure, he has not only successfully led efforts to transition the Conservatory from public to private management but has also enhanced its collections and programs, and transformed it into one of the world's greenest public gardens. Leading the most ambitious expansion project in Phipps' history, Piacentini has been instrumental in the building of the first LEED® certified visitor center in a public garden and the most energy-efficient conservatory in the world. Now he is overseeing construction of the **Center for Sustainable Landscapes**, one of the first living buildings in the world that will generate its own energy and capture and treat its own water on site, meeting or exceeding the three highest green standards: the Living Building Challenge, LEED® Platinum and SITES™ Certification for landscapes.



Says Nicola Ripley, director of Betty Ford Alpine Gardens and APGA board president, “Richard has led the way in sustainability. His quiet transformation of the garden into one of the country's best examples of a green institution, pioneering the use of sustainable building techniques, demonstrated his leadership and foresight.”

In addition to his APGA Service Award, other accolades more recently garnered by Piacentini include: the 2011 American Horticultural Society's Great American Gardener's Award; the 2010 U.S. Green Building Council's Award for Individual Leadership in the NGO Category; APGA's Professional Citation Award; a Shades of Green Leadership Award from the Green Building Alliance; a Carnegie Science Award for his work on environmental issues; and a Diamond CEO Award from the *Pittsburgh Business Times*, among others.

Originally from New York, Piacentini holds a master's degree in botany from the University of Connecticut, a master's degree in business administration from Virginia Commonwealth University, and a bachelor's degree in pharmacy from the University of Rhode Island. Outside of his work with Phipps and APGA, he also sits on the board of directors for the World Water Center in Washington, D.C. and is the author of *The Plant Collections Directory for Canada and the United States*.

ABOUT PHIPPS

Built by Henry W. Phipps in 1893 at the height of Pittsburgh's industrial prowess, Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens has evolved from the nation's first teaching conservatory to a distinguished eco-champion among America's 500 public gardens.

Phipps' mission is to inspire and educate visitors with the beauty and importance of plants; to advance sustainability and worldwide biodiversity through action and research; and to celebrate its historic glasshouse.

Phipps is open daily from 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.; Fridays until 10 p.m. Adults, \$12; Seniors 62 and older and students with valid ID, \$11; children 2-18, \$9; children under 2, free.

For more information, call 412/622-6914 or visit phipps.conservatory.org.

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