

For Immediate Release

February 15, 2005

## Share This Secret!

18 Private Home Owners to Open Their Gardens to the Public March 12th

**New Orleans, LA-** The lush tropical wonderment of 18 very private gardens in uptown New Orleans, routinely enjoyed only by their owners, will come alive in full public glory Saturday, March 12, 2005, with the return of **THE SECRET GARDENS TOUR®**.

**The 2005 TOUR** will begin at 9 a.m. and conclude at 4 p.m. Visitors will see, touch and smell the flowering magnificence of gardens ranging from the formal designs of Ellen Biddle Shipman, original designer of world famous Longue Vue Gardens, to the casual, naturalistic and organic. One of the 18 will feature a labyrinth, two will offer art and garden accessories in the "Garden Gallery" and "Secret Treasures," another will be a "KinderGarden" and offer a special welcome to children who are encouraged to walk along with parents (free of charge if under age five.) A general admission price of \$10 will be charged and tickets can be purchased in advance on the web site:

[www.secretgardenstour.org](http://www.secretgardenstour.org), or on the day of the event at 1021, 1425 and 1621 State Street. Garden Clubs and organizations are encouraged to attend and receive a \$2.00 per person discount on purchases of 20 or more.

**THE SECRET GARDENS TOUR®** will consist of a self-guided walk through a carefully chosen selection of the most envied but rarely if ever seen uptown gardens, located primarily on State Street. It was first introduced in the spring of 2004 and is now considered a "**must-see**" by horticultural devotees, professional and amateur alike. The **TOUR**, in its inaugural presentation, showcased eleven premier private gardens as a means of raising awareness and funds for brain injury survivors and their families.

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Yet another feature of this second annual **SECRET GARDENS TOUR®** will be the presentation of lectures throughout the day on brain injury topics and on gardening. Several of the medical community's leading neurological and rehabilitation experts from across the Greater New Orleans community will participate in the program along with horticulturists. One of the lectures will combine both the medical and gardening aspects of the event under the title: " The Healing Properties of a Garden."

The volunteer corps dedicated to brain injury education and who are responsible for staging the TOUR point out that the United States is presently experiencing a "silent epidemic" of traumatic brain injuries (TBI) with 1.5 million Americans having suffered a brain injury. Another 770,000 Americans suffer strokes each year. Add in the brain injuries caused by tumors, cardiac arrests, near drownings, lightning strikes, infection or side effects of medicines and the numbers are literally staggering.

The results of a brain injury are life-altering for those who survive. Ordinary tasks such as eating, walking and talking can be impossible or require extensive therapy after a brain injury. In some cases, the survivor may only regain a percentage of his/her pre-brain injury self. For adults, returning to their careers may not be an option; for children, school may mean “special education.” The inaugural **SECRET GARDENS TOUR®** proceeds paid for a local resource guide on brain injury and copies of the guide will be available to the public at all of the **2005 TOUR** gardens. The guide outlines the different services available in the Greater New Orleans area including not only locations of neurological assistance and rehabilitation centers, but also mainstream and alternative therapies, support groups, counseling, web sites and other resources for brain injury survivors.

The **2005 SECRET GARDENS TOUR** is open to the public. Natives and visitors alike are encouraged to consider taking a ride on the historic St. Charles Avenue Streetcar to and from State Street for easy access to the **TOUR** locations. Dozens of volunteers and professionals who design and maintain the **TOUR** gardens will be strategically placed throughout the **TOUR** area to assist visitors. Musical entertainment and complimentary refreshments will be provided in several garden areas throughout the day. A new addition will be shuttle buses traveling the route.

(For tickets, call Susie Newburger, (504) 450-2166. For further information, contact Kathleen Waring, 2005 Chair, The Secret Gardens Tour® at (504) 914-4865, [kwaring@ocsbbs.com](mailto:kwaring@ocsbbs.com), or Jerry Romig at Peter A. Mayer Public Relations, (504) 210-1333, [romigj@peteramayer.com](mailto:romigj@peteramayer.com))