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PRESS NOTICE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SUSSEX CHARITY SHORT LISTED FOR THE OBSERVER ETHICAL AWARDS

GardenAfrica, the East Sussex based charity¹ that trains communities in Southern Africa to create gardens and grow their own plants for food, medicine and income, is pleased to announce that they have been short listed in the Conservation category for the Observer Ethical Awards 2009. The Awards will be announced at an awards ceremony on 3rd June at the Roof Gardens, Kensington.

The entrants were judged by a combination of reader votes and by a celebrity panel that included Jo Wood, Ben Okri, Rick Edwards and Deborah Meaden. The panel was looking for innovative and passionate projects which have done the most to protect the planet, so **GardenAfrica** is thrilled to be chosen as one of the final three for this category.

GardenAfrica was established in 2002. We work in partnership with communities and local NGOs, in the design and implementation of garden-related projects aimed at reducing poverty and malnutrition in sub-Saharan Africa. Malnutrition kills millions. It saps the productivity and potential of entire societies, and increases vulnerability to HIV infection and hastens viral progression to AIDS.

Our projects create gardens on land adjacent to schools, hospitals, health and community centres. These gardens are designed to address a range of specific local needs, focusing on food security, health and nutrition, education and training, income generation and recreation. Each garden aims to promote and enhance the relationship between communities and their environment by focusing on natural biological approaches to land use and resource management.

Improving the nutritional intake of communities through the creation of training and resource gardens, can help overcome many major health challenges facing Africa. A typical **GardenAfrica** family plot of 100 square metres can feed and medicate a family of five all year round – every year.

We are currently developing, and seeking funding for, the following projects:

The Africulture Project, Grahamstown, South Africa²

Kalahari Garden Project, Namibia³

Food Security in a Changing Environment, Hhohho, Swaziland⁴

We hope to begin working in Zimbabwe later this year.

Every **GardenAfrica** garden provides a practical resource from which to encourage similar initiatives. By training local people to train their peers, the techniques can be promoted throughout the community, greatly increasing the long-term impact of each project.

Full project details, including photographs of the gardens and beneficiaries, and updates on the participants, are available from **GardenAfrica** contacts:

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

¹ **GardenAfrica** is a UK-based charity that trains communities in Southern Africa to create gardens and grow their own plants for food, medicine and income. Working with trusted local partners, we establish productive organic training gardens in schools, hospitals and clinics, providing the tools needed to produce a balanced diet and support a more sustainable approach to healthcare.

Our work helps to relieve poverty, sickness and distress in rural communities in Africa. By providing training, information and other assistance and through the undertaking and dissemination of research, our project work ensures that even the most vulnerable can cultivate a sustainable future and improve their quality of life.

² The Africulture Project, Grahamstown, South Africa This project comprises a training resource and nursery specialising in the cultivation, processing and marketing of medicinal plants. The project has a foundation phase developed in partnership with the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew and local training partner Umthathi, with funding from Defra. The Africulture Project was initiated to address the loss of biodiversity within the Eastern Cape Province, focussing on conserving indigenous medicinal plant species through cultivation. Many species are harvested illegally from the wild and are threatened by over-exploitation. Indigenous medicinal plants are vital to traditional health care, with more than 80% of South Africans relying on the informal sector for health provision. Innovative methods of supplying the market with medicinal plants are essential to conserve these species, as is the traditional knowledge associated with them. Training incorporates cultivation and sustainable harvesting from the wild, and will extend to producers across 17 districts, enabling them to establish micro-nurseries to supply the traditional healthcare market. Methods promote conservation management through training with traditional healers and harvesters. The Africulture Project is now set to move into its next phase.

³ Kalahari Garden Project, Namibia We are working in partnership with the Global Diversity Foundation and The Eden Project, as well as local NGO, Komeho, to develop this Project, which has been established to support the internally displaced San peoples, who once hunted and gathered for edible and medicinal plants, on land that is now owned by vast commercial farms. Many of the plants and techniques used over thousands of years to utilise and manage resources are now at risk of being lost to future generations. The Project is working with schools and communities to assist them in the task of feeding themselves and their children, and will pilot indigenous gardens - researching and putting into cultivation species which are more culturally and ecologically appropriate. The Project has a total of 42 gardens spread between five villages, the majority of which are already yielding produce. The harvest and consumption data recorded in the past year suggests that diet has been significantly improved. Over the coming year, we expect that Project activities will: improve the food security, nutrition and health of a population of approximately 650; improve access to clean water – promoting systems for sustainability and re-use; provide specialist training in resource-use to local partners; consolidate and expand current knowledge of San plant-lore; and help build the skills and infrastructure necessary for developing self-reliant communities.

⁴ Food Security in a Changing Environment, Hhohho, Swaziland During its foundation phase, this Project has developed homestead based gardening practices appropriate to adverse climatic conditions through an inter-disciplinary, practical approach. It has successfully enabled an effective response to acute food insecurity, and health and livelihood challenges in two diverse rural communities. Most Swazi live in rural areas that are ravaged by drought, overgrazing, soil depletion and invasive species. There are 70,000 orphans and 20,000 people currently living with AIDS - over 40% of the population. With our pilot now complete, we have made a successful bid for EU funding to roll out this approach across a further six communities in 2009-11, which is now underway. This will support and enhance the management of natural resources to boost the cultivation of food, and enable the establishment of plant-based livelihoods. We will achieve this by selecting and training rural people. They will be supported to establish nurseries at their homesteads, from where they can transfer their new skills to others, whilst earning an income. A simple garden demonstration site is under development. Successful candidates are being selected for intensive training, including agro-ecology training. This has been shown in the pilot to have successfully addressed food insecurity in adverse climatic conditions. Peer to peer training forms the basis of our approach. Each garden will encourage the establishment of a further 20 gardens through skills and materials transfer – totalling 1,200 budding gardener producing a diverse range of edible and medicinal plants. At an average of eight people per household, that equates to 9,600 people with continued and sustainable access to nutritious food to improve health and productivity.