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### **Louis Raymond Advocates the Restorative Benefits of Nature Encourages Gardening to Achieve Better Health**

**New York, NY** ...“Want to feel good? Go dabble in the dirt,” advises Louis Raymond, master landscape designer and principal of Renaissance Gardening Ltd. “Gardening has profound health and therapeutic benefits, and you don’t need acres to enjoy these rewards.”

According to Louis’ personal observations, and the findings and evidence of the scientific community, gardening leads to improved physical and psychological well-being, providing:

- **An interesting, motivating workout that improves endurance, strength, mobility and flexibility.** Gardening constitutes moderate to strenuous exercise that incorporates many important elements of good exercise, including stretching, breathing, posture, repetition and movement, as well as resistance principles similar to weight training. A recent academic study found that people who garden at least once a week have higher bone density than those who swim, jog, walk or do aerobics. Shoveling, hoeing and push-mowing all increase strength and flexibility and strengthen joints.
- **A proven way to relax and reduce stress levels.** Studies in environmental psychology show that gardening bypasses the analytical functions of the mind and reawakens our senses, creating a meditative state. Stress, and its related illnesses, are relieved. People in restricted environments or with chronic conditions greatly benefit from gardening, time spent in a garden or just exposure to green growing things. Research undertaken at Texas A&M University into therapeutic environments shows that patients recovering from surgery who have a view of trees have significantly shorter hospital stays, fewer complaints, and take less pain medication.
- **A fun, satisfying source for fresh produce.** Edible gardens provide not just the pleasure of eating home-grown produce, but involvement in all phases of the process—preparing the soil and planting, tending, and harvesting crops to preparing meals using in-season produce—that develops an understanding of environmental stewardship, the interconnectedness of people to one another, to their community, and to the earth, and an appreciation of meaningful, productive work.

- **An important source of vitamin D through exposure to sunlight.** Sunlight can provide our recommended daily vitamin D requirement, and 10 to 15 minutes' sun exposure at least twice a week on the face, arms, hands, or back without sunscreen is usually sufficient. There is increasingly strong evidence that vitamin D helps protect against lymphoma and cancers of the colon, prostate, lung and, ironically, the skin.
- **A healthier environment with improved air quality.** Plant roots help to stabilize the ground and reduce soil erosion. Cultivation also improves air quality, this being particularly relevant in urban settings. Foliage plants in office or apartment settings clean the air by diminishing the level of common indoor pollutants. In fact, studies show that the presence of plants results in a significant reduction—around 25 percent—in fatigue, coughing, sore throats and cold-related illnesses.

The restorative benefits of nature—lowered blood pressure, enhanced immune function, reduced stress, improved air quality—are available to anyone with a love of green things and a willingness to work among them. As Louis puts it, “However far removed from nature we have become, we still feel an affinity for natural things. The act of working with plants gives a sense of health and regeneration, of excitement about the life teeming around you. I urge one and all to roll down your sleeves (lest you encounter poison ivy or sumac), dally in the dirt, get grounded and reconnect with nature.”

Renaissance Gardening® Ltd. is a full-service landscape design company committed to enhancing the natural beauty of outdoor living environments. By achieving balance among design, horticulture and hardscaping, Renaissance Gardening creates landscapes that satisfy clients' needs and preferences for functionality and aesthetics, and enrich the lives of those who experience them. From offices in Hopkinton, RI and New York, NY, Renaissance Gardening serves an international clientele whose properties range from country estates to urban terraces.

For more information on Louis Raymond and Renaissance Gardening, please visit [www.rgarden.com](http://www.rgarden.com), or contact Katerina Caterisano, Public Relations Director, Network Design and Communications; phone: 212/431-4675; fax: 212/431-5786; email: [Kat@networknyc.com](mailto:Kat@networknyc.com).

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