



**PRESS RELEASE**  
For immediate release

## Mauritius Hemp Now in Bloom at the Botanical Garden

**Montréal, November 16, 2009** – Montréal's Nature Museums announce that the eagerly awaited event has finally occurred: the Mauritius hemp agave plant (*Furcraea foetida*), in the Arid Regions Greenhouse at the Montréal Botanical Garden, has begun blooming. **The little round buds and star-shaped flowers look like ornaments hanging on the plant.** The flowers measure about 5 to 7 cm across when fully open. **They will bloom in succession, for the first and last time, over a period of several weeks.** For the moment the Mauritius hemp is not giving off the fetid odour suggested by its Latin name. The next step for the plant will be to produce thousands of bulbils on the flower stock or offsets at its base, which will allow it to reproduce. Once it has finished flowering, it will gradually die back, as is the case for most members of this family.

### A very special plant family

The Agavaceae family, native to the Americas, includes nearly 300 species with fibrous leaves arranged in a rosette. It takes these perennial plants a number of years to grow and flower, with most of them growing for eight to twenty years before the inflorescence finally develops, starting in the centre of the rosette of leaves.

### From Marie-Victorin to Denis Barabé

Denis Barabé, a botanist at the Botanical Garden, brought this Mauritius hemp to the Botanical Garden in 1986, after collecting a plantlet in the wild, on Mount Bourda, in Cayenne, French Guyana. It was entered in the Garden's records on December 3 of that year, becoming the 2,182nd plant entered in the 1986 collection records. Mr. Barabé has worked at the Montréal Botanical Garden since 1976 and is also a researcher at the plant biology research institute (IRBV).

Since its earliest days, the Montréal Botanical Garden has had a team of botanists responsible for collecting numerous specimens both in Quebec and abroad and for adding to its collections by exchanging plants with other botanical gardens. Even today, visitors can admire a number of plants collected by Brother Marie-Victorin, the Garden's founder, and by Henry Teuscher, its designer, landscape architect and first curator.

The **exhibition greenhouses are open from Tuesday to Sunday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

While you're here, don't miss the ***Under the Cuban Sun with Marie-Victorin* exhibition** and lots of other showy fall plants, including the specimens in fruit in the **Tropical Food Plants Greenhouse.**

*Montréal's Nature Museums – the Biodôme, Insectarium, Botanical Garden and Planetarium – helping people enjoy nature to the fullest.*

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### Information:

Karine Jalbert, Communications Co-ordinator  
Telephone: 514 872-1453  
E-mail: karinejalbert@ville.montreal.qc.ca

François Ouellet, Marketing Representative  
Telephone: 514 872-3232  
E-mail: fouellet\_2@ville.montreal.qc.ca

**Visual available on request.**