Greenagers, Alchemy Initiative, and Berkshire Museum partner to install vegetable gardens Sunday, May 22

[PITTSFIELD, MA] — The youngsters enrolled in summer camps at the Berkshire Museum will be getting their hands dirty, as they learn how to grow their own food in the new organic vegetable gardens on the Berkshire Museum’s front lawn. Through a collaboration with Greenagers’ Front Lawn Food program and Alchemy Initiative, four raised garden beds will be installed in a highly visible location just outside the front doors on Sunday, May 22, beginning at 10 a.m. During the summer, children attending the Museum’s summer programs and activities will learn about growing and harvesting the organic vegetables. The garden produce will be donated to the Community Food Pantry at South Congregational Church, right across the street from the Museum.

“Hosting organic vegetable gardens is a good fit for the Museum, with our mission of engaging and inspiring the members of our community,” says Craig Langlois, Berkshire Museum’s director of education and public programs. “Offering experiences that connect students to their food sources and creating a sense of social responsibility is part of what we do. It’s a great opportunity to introduce the importance of volunteerism to the children who participate in the Museum’s summer programs.”

Garden seedlings will be certified organic from Windy Ridge Farm, one of the vendors at the Downtown Pittsfield Farmers Market, a program of Alchemy Initiative. Members of the Farmers Market crew, hired through the Pittsfield Community Connection, a local youth anti-gang initiative, will participate in this project and help build the gardens.

“By teaming up with Alchemy Initiative and the Berkshire Museum, Greenagers will be able to reach an important audience: Museum visitors, Pittsfield residents and others
who will learn about Greenagers’ outdoor jobs and education programs,” said Will Conklin, Greenagers executive director. “Even more importantly, we are partnering with the Museum to help children get into the happy experience of growing food. If we start young, the habit will grow right up with the children.”

Greenagers, a Great Barrington-based nonprofit, is an outdoor jobs, service, and education program serving teens and young adults year-round. Each summer, Greenagers work crews fan out to work on farms with experienced farmers, maintain outdoor recreational properties such as the Appalachian Trail, and build Front Lawn Food gardens for families. In 2015, the Front Lawn Food program expanded into Pittsfield through a collaboration with the Berkshire Community Action Council, which helps provide supplies and assists in identifying families to receive gardens. Expanding outreach in Pittsfield is a Greenagers goal this year.

Pittsfield-based Alchemy Initiative believes that everyone in our community deserves access to fresh, nutritious food and much of its programming revolves around this idea. “We’re so pleased to continue partnering with the Museum, and now Greenagers, to transform the front lawn of the Museum into teaching gardens and a source of much needed fresh produce for our neighbors,” says Jessica Vecchia, executive director of Alchemy Initiative. “Through a similar project we run at the farmers market with members of the Unitarian Church, the ‘Giving Table’ allows shoppers and vendors to donate more than 2,000 pounds of fresh food to local pantries and shelters every year.” This year, Alchemy Initiative is expanding its programming through a collaboration with the Berkshire Botanical Garden to create an agriculture-based youth development program that aims to foster ecological literacy, healthy lifestyles, employability and social-emotional learning skills through the lens of food and farming.

**About the Berkshire Museum**

Located in downtown Pittsfield, Massachusetts, at 39 South St., the Berkshire Museum, a Smithsonian Affiliate, is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is $13 adult, $6 child; Museum members and
children age 3 and under enjoy free admission. For more information, visit www.berkshiremuseum.org or call 413.443.7171.

In association with the Smithsonian since 2013, Berkshire Museum is part of a select group of museums, cultural, educational, and arts organizations that share the Smithsonian's resources with the nation.

Established by Zenas Crane in 1903, Berkshire Museum integrates art, history, and natural science in a wide range of programs and exhibitions that inspire educational connections between the disciplines. In the galleries, Tiny Titans: Dinosaur Eggs and Babies is on view May 14 through August 28. Window on the World: A Look into the Permanent Collection is ongoing. Little Cinema is open year-round. Spark!Lab, Worlds in Miniature, Aquarium, and other exhibitions are ongoing.

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