

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **NTEC EcoGardens: Cultivating a Greener Future for Persons with Special Needs**



Niagara Falls, ON – April 23, 2009 – NTEC (Niagara Training & Employment Agency) is opening a new retail greenhouse business in Port Robinson to serve gardeners across Niagara. Featuring more than 400 different varieties of annuals, perennials, vegetables and native plants, NTEC EcoGardens is a unique retail environment run by agency staff and individuals with special needs.

NTEC is a charitable non-profit organization that empowers people with special needs from around the Niagara Region to participate more fully in community life. Participants in the greenhouse and garden centre programs gain experience in the areas of potting, planting, watering, packing and customer service. These programs may become an effective transition to paid employment for our participants.

NTEC Chief Executive Officer Andrew Lewis said “Community feedback about NTEC EcoGardens has been very positive. People are happy that by purchasing their plants at NTEC EcoGardens, they are investing in a community program and supporting individuals with special needs. It’s a great opportunity to purchase locally and responsibly.”

NTEC EcoGardens’ wide selection of native plants gives gardening enthusiasts a local source for plants they may not have been able to find before. Native plants provide an ecologically sustainable alternative to horticultural species. This approach is an economical method for lowering maintenance costs and restoring indigenous plants while creating beautiful gardens. Free introductory workshops on edible gardens and native plants will be offered in May. See [www.ntec-ecogardens.com](http://www.ntec-ecogardens.com) for further details.

In addition to producing plants for sale to the public, NTEC program participants will also grow for Sassafras Farms’ ecological restoration projects. Founded in 2005, Sassafras Farms specializes in native plant identification, propagation, ecological restoration design, and project implementation.

NTEC (Niagara Training & Employment Agency) is a non-profit organization that empowers people with special needs to participate more fully in community life. The agency’s sustainable employment and life skills oriented programming reach more than 180 individuals each year.

### NTEC EcoGardens Quick Facts

Location: 120 Canby Street, Port Robinson (10 minutes from Niagara Falls, St. Catharines and Welland)

Opening: Wednesday May 6, 2009

Hours: Wednesday to Friday 10:00-6:00, Saturday and Sunday 8:00 to 4:00

Website: [www.ntec-ecogardens.com](http://www.ntec-ecogardens.com)

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For further information, members of the media may contact:

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