



The Division of Agriculture Activities

March 07, 2012

Find us on the web at:
<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag>

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Questions or Comments?
E-Mail or call 907-761-3864.

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Directors Note

This year – spring will not come soon enough. With incredibly cold weather, wind and end-less snow; I for one will be thankful when the winter of 2012 is behind us. Perhaps not as thankful as the moose, however; a fact which was made apparent to me last weekend as I had a standoff with one in my driveway. It is an understatement to say I was surprised at its willingness to go head to head with my pickup in lieu of exiting the beaten path and moving into the woods. Turning to face me with her hackles up and her head down she made it very apparent she wasn't going to move without a fight. Her fight over flight choice surprised me. Fortunately, after a few indecisive seconds on both my part and the moose – she had second thoughts and chose the woods.

January and February are typically busy months for Agriculture conferences and this year has followed that trend. The Delta Farm Forum was held the last weekend in February and was well attended. The speakers covered a diverse range of topics such as Peonies, Large Black Hogs, potatoes, and Barley Fuel. I want to congratulate Frank Borman for being named the 2011 Cooperator of the year.

As many of you know, Bacterial Ring Rot (BRR) reappeared this past growing season in the valley. This devastating disease continues to be a concern for potato growers. The Division will be hosting a meeting on March 22, 2012 beginning at 9:00 a.m. at the Plant Materials Center (PMC), 5310 S. Bodenbug Spur, Palmer, Alaska to discuss BRR, Alaska's Seed Certification Standards and hear from guest speaker Willem Schrage, the Director of the North Dakota State Seed Department. We will also be discussing the motion by the Alaska Seed Growers, Inc in support of new regulations requiring the use of certified seed on all commercial potato fields of an acre or greater. Please mark your calendars and plan on attending this informational meeting. To attend telephonically, use the toll free call in number: 1-800-315-6338 (pass code 122# at the prompt).

The legislative session is in full swing and has just passed the half way point. Although many discussions have been centered on oil, agriculture continues to be a topic of interest. Last week, [House Concurrent Resolution 24](#) was introduced by Representative Bill Stoltz to the House Finance Committee. This resolution calls the Governor to establish a state food resource development working group with the primary goal of producing more locally grown and harvested food items to be consumed in Alaska, by Alaskans. The hearing included invited testimony and much discussion from the committee.

In closing, I'd like to congratulate Stoney Wright, Phil Czapl and Brennan Low for winning the Educational Achievement Award for their [Alaska Coastal Revegetation & Erosion Control Guide](#). This publication plays an important role in providing expertise and case studies on revegetation projects and assists in keeping Alaska healthy and vibrant.

As always, please take the time to review the Division newsletter to stay up to date on agriculture issues, available grants and events. If you have any questions, comments or concerns please give us a call as 907-745-7200.

-Franci Havemeister

*"To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves."
- Mohandas K. Gandhi.*



The 2011 Educational Achievement award from the International Erosion Control Association

Agriculture Calendar

- ▶ Fri. Mar. 9th, 6 - 7 pm; **Chicken University**; Sutton Public Library, Sutton.
- ▶ Fri. Mar. 9th, 6:30 - 8:30 pm; **Spring Garden Conference** Keynote; Anch. Museum.
Sat. Mar. 10th, 8:30 am - 7 pm; **Spring Garden Conference** UAA Consortium Library.
Details: [here](#).
- ▶ Fri. Mar. 9th 6 - 8:30 pm; **Organic Gardening Course**; Mat-Su College, Palmer.
Fri. Mar. 23rd 6 - 8:30 pm;
Fri. Mar. 30th 6 - 8:30 pm;
Details: [here](#).
- ▶ Tues. Mar. 13th-Thurs. Mar. 15th **Sustainable Agriculture Conference (SARE)**; Fairbanks.
Agenda, Registration details: [here](#).
- ▶ Tues. Mar. 20th, 4 - 4:30 pm: **Webinar: Teacher Scholarship Program vs. Farm-to-School Grant - Which is Right for Me?**
Registration: [here](#).
- ▶ Wed. Mar. 21st, 1 pm **BAC Regular Meeting**; Division of Ag., Palmer
To participate via telephone: (800) 315-6338; Passcode: 122#
- ▶ Thurs. Mar. 22nd, 9 am: **Potato Producers Meeting**; Plant Materials Ctr, Palmer.
To participate via telephone: (800) 315-6338; Passcode: 122#

If you have an event that you would like to add to the calendar, please contact [Lora Haralson](#).



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Marketing Section

Grants, Scholarships, and the 2012 Alaska Grown Source Book

I'm not sure the marketing team could be any busier. We now have five grant applications open, three targeted towards farmers, ranchers and producers and two aimed at teachers and school food professionals. Two of the grants, the Cooperative Marketing Program grant and the Alaska Teacher Scholarship Program have deadlines in March. Find more information on our website at dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_grants.htm.

We are working on the behind-the-scenes information that goes into the development of the Alaska Grown Source Book. The changes implemented this year will make a dramatic improvement to the publication, including new interactive features that make the information more accessible.

If you were listed in the 2010 Source Book, you will soon be receiving an e-mail asking you to update your information. If you were not in the 2010 publication, keep your eyes on our webpage for a link that will allow you to sign up and provide information about your farm. The marketing section's home page is located at dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_ms.htm. If you would like a copy of the current Alaska Grown Source Book, contact the Division of Agriculture at (907) 745-7200.

Remember to follow Alaska Grown on Facebook at facebook.com/dnr.alaskagrown for all of the latest updates.



Record Growth of Farmers' Markets to Continue in 2012

The number of farmers' markets in Alaska grew by 46% from 2010 to 2011 – the largest amount of growth in the nation! Farmers' markets serve as an incredible outlet for our Alaska Grown producers and we are pleased to see more markets opening in 2012.

If you are a farmers' market manager, please contact Kristi Krueger (Kristi.Krueger@alaska.gov, 761-3858) by March 30th with your market information for 2012. We create and publish a statewide listing of the markets each spring and want to be sure to include all markets statewide.



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Alaska Farm-to-School Program Update

Farmers and Youth at the Alaska School Nutrition Association (AK-SNA) Conference

This year at the annual AK-SNA conference, the agricultural community was given a unique opportunity to share their message in front of an audience that represents enormous in-state purchasing power; the school food service.



Ann Pennington

Ann Pennington is the president of AK-SNA as well as the food service director of Alaska Gateway School District, located in the area surrounding Tok. When planning the conference this year, Ann made sure that the Farm-to-School program was given every opportunity to share our message. At the vendor show, where vendors bring new products for the school food service to sample, the Farm-to-School program had a table showing off some of the locally produced food resources that could be used in school cafeterias.

The Farm-to-School program also sponsored a ProStart class taught by Chugiak High teacher Kathy Vik, showcasing the culinary talent of her students. Three stu-



Chugiak High ProStart students with teacher Kathy Vik at the 2012 AK-SNA conference

dents, Alesa Noe, Sierra Carr, and Alleayah Allen, made a potato wedge dish available at the conference, complete with a recipe, nutritional information, and pictures of the producer on the back!

The next day, the Farm-to-School program updated conference attendees about activities and initiatives in store for the next school year. Following that presentation was, for many attendees, the highlight of the conference: a Farmer Discussion Panel.



From left to right: Frank Borman, Franci Havemiester, Ben Vanderweele, Ann Pennington, Johanna Herron, and Bryce Wrigley

Frank Borman of Borman farm in Delta, Bryce Wrigley of Wrigley farm in Delta, and Ben Vanderweele of Vanderweele farm in Palmer all participated in the panel session. Each panelist shared their unique perspective about how farming and the school food market can come together to bring local foods to the school meal programs around the state. Many attendees made it a point to mention the impact of hearing directly from the farmers. There was considerable interest in finding ways to buy local product when possible.

The Farm-to-School program was also invited to lead a discussion of local food successes. This session highlighted stories from food service directors and the ways they have found to incorporate local foods into meal programs and the impact on their youth.

Alaska Farm-to-School Grant

We are excited to announce the second Alaska Farm-to-School mini-grant cycle. After a lot of feedback, we have decided to open the grant earlier in the year, so applicants can better plan projects to coincide with the growing season. The application is now available on our webpage, at dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_grantsFTS.htm.

As a reminder, the purpose of the Farm-to-School (FTS) grant program is to:

- Increase understanding by Alaska youth about how food gets from its original form to the plate;
- Promote healthy food choices, and
- Encourage a preference for food grown and harvested in Alaska.



For more information about the Alaska Farm-to-School program, or if you have any questions, contact Johanna Herron at Johanna.herron@alaska.gov or (907) 374-3714.

For Farm-to-School updates, news, grant opportunities, and announcements, join our list-serv at: list.state.ak.us/soalists/akfarmtoschool/jl.htm. Also remember to check out the Farm-to-School facebook page at: facebook.com/AlaskaFarmToSchool.

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http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_sales.htm

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Pest Detection / Inspection Section

Certified Seed: Don't Plant a Pest!

Seed catalogs are starting to arrive in our mailboxes, and that means it won't be long before Alaskans are planning their spring gardens. But before you start mapping out those rows, The Division of Agriculture would like to remind growers about the seed potato and tomato plant quarantine that remains in effect in the state. This quarantine is enforced in an effort to prevent several devastating diseases from entering our state, where they can wreak havoc on home gardeners and commercial growers alike.

The following are regulated articles, and are prohibited from entering Alaska except under certain conditions:

Seed potatoes must have been produced as certified seed potatoes in the state or country of origin, and must be certified and tagged. They are required to be inspected to ensure that no disease is found in the lot, and inspected again at the shipping point. All certified seed potatoes, whether grown in Alaska or imported, must have a certified seed tag attached to each container or to the sales display.



Seed potatoes sold in Alaska are labeled with a Certified Seed tag

Tomato plants must be grown in a nursery or greenhouse that has been officially inspected and found to be free of late blight disease. The plants must also be officially inspected at the point of shipping, and treated with a registered fungicide prior to shipment. Tomato seeds are exempt from quarantine requirements, as are tomato plants that were grown from seed in an Alaskan greenhouse.

Growers should also be aware that, however tempting, it's a very bad idea to plant table stock potatoes (those meant for human consumption) into the ground. Since these potatoes have not gone through a seed certification program, you could risk infecting your garden or farm soils (and those of your neighbors) with many types of diseases by planting these tubers. And besides, many table-stock potatoes have been treated with a sprout inhibitor, preventing them from producing healthy plants. Please be diligent when you shop for those starts and seeds, and help protect Alaskan crops from unnecessary risk.

If you have questions or concerns about the seed potato and tomato plant quarantine, you can contact the Alaska Division of Agriculture at (907) 745-7200. Further information about late blight is available from the Long Island Horticultural Research and Extension Center of Cornell University, at www.longislandhort.cornell.edu/vegpath/lbfaq.pdf.



Characteristic leaf and stem lesions on a potato plant

Photo: Dr. Meg McGrath | Cornell University

Plant Materials Center

<http://plants.alaska.gov/>

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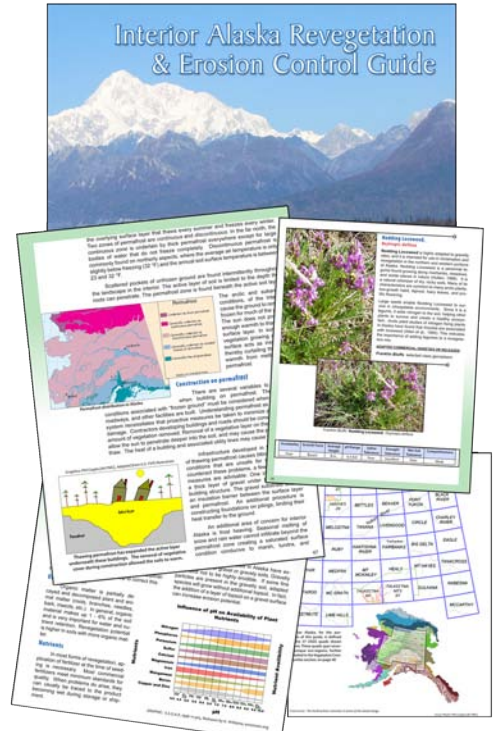
Plant Materials Center

Upcoming Publications from the Alaska Plant Materials Center

The Alaska Plant Materials Center is readying two educational documents for publication this Spring. Both publications provide detailed information about adapted plant species appropriate for use in revegetation projects and as forage.

The Interior Alaska Revegetation & Erosion Control Guide is near completion. This publication follows in the footsteps of the award winning Alaska Coastal Revegetation & Erosion Control Guide, and will serve to assist the public with revegetation and erosion projects in Alaska's Interior. A variety of topics are covered, including project planning and techniques for dealing with permafrost, wetlands, and mining sites.

A unique part of this guide is the case studies section, which highlights past projects completed by the private and public sector. These studies are a great resource for information exchange and to see how other entities have designed and implemented revegetation plans to meet project goals.

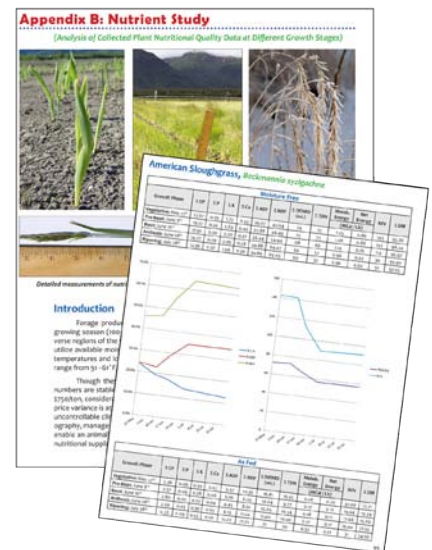


Alaska Forage Manual

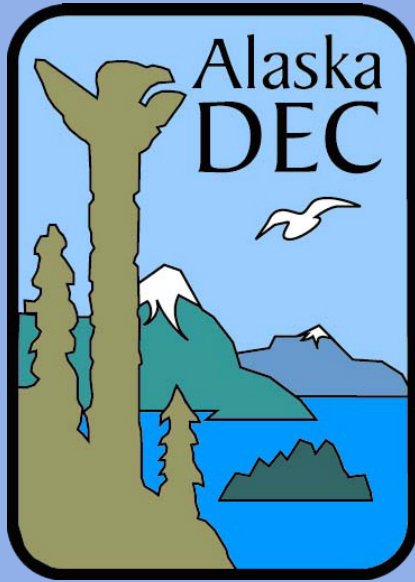


After nearly a year of research, the Alaska Forage Manual is also nearing completion. This manual details important considerations when raising grass, grain and legume crops for hay and silage. Information about soil nutrients, the dietary requirements of animals and seeding methods used to grow forage crops is presented. The Alaska Forage Manual is targeted to current and future producers of forage crops, and is funded by a grant from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

An in-depth study of the nutrient value of over a dozen grass species was conducted during the 2011 growing season, and the results of this study are included as an appendix to this manual. Factors such as total dietary nutrition and relative feed value of these crops are charted over time, showing the optimal to harvest each species.



To be notified when copies of these publications are available, contact the Alaska Plant Materials Center, at (907) 745-4469. You can also email editor Brennan Low, at Brennan.Low@alaska.gov.



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Taking the Handsink into the Fields - A Simple Solution to Improve Produce Safety

Food safety concerns are on the rise, whether you sell at a Farmers' Market or through a wholesale grocer. Whether you plan to have a Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) audit conducted on your farm, or you just want to improve the safety of the produce you harvest, adding a hand-wash station on your farm is a simple and inexpensive tool.



Photo: Johanna Herron | AK Division of Ag.

To get started, you need a water container. These can be purchased in the camping section of major retailers, are usually blue and often come with a twist spigot. Insulated water containers (the kind used at sporting events) are also nice, especially when filled with warm water on a chilly day.

Once you have a water container, you may need to replace the spigot. Pop out the push button spigot and screw in a twist or flip spigot that you can pick up a hardware store for a few dollars. Why use a twist or flip spigot? It is difficult to wash your hands well with one hand pushing a button. To clean your hands, you need to rub them together with soap under water for 15-20 seconds. Flip spigots make this much easier.

Put your paper towel roll on a table top dispenser or on a rope next to the water container. Place a catch basin under the water container to recover all that water and get some soap (liquid or bar; either is fine). Make sure your catch basin is big enough and close enough to the spigot to catch the water without a lot of splashing.

This hand-wash station is portable, easy to set up and costs less than \$20.00. Not only will your produce be safer - you will be protecting your health, too.

When to use a portable hand-wash station:

- *U-Pick Farms* - before/after picking produce;
- *Farm Stands* - for vendors handling produce;
- *Farms and Market Gardens* - for workers near the produce harvest area; and
- *School Gardens* - for garden mentors, teachers and children.

When to wash your hands:

- After eating, drinking or smoking;
- After using chemicals while gardening;
- After using the restroom;
- After coming into contact with any contaminant source;
- After handling garbage; and
- Before harvesting anything out of a garden or when handling produce after harvest.

How to wash your hands

- Wet hands with water;
- Use enough soap to build a good lather;
- Scrub hands vigorously; be sure to reach all areas of the fingers and hands for at least 10 seconds;
- Rinse hands to remove all soap residue while continuing to rub hands;
- Dry hands with a paper towel; and
- Use the paper towel to turn off the water to prevent recontamination of your hands.

The Farm-to-School Program and the DEC Food Safety and Sanitation Program collaborated to create "[Alaska School Garden Food Safety Guidelines](#)", which includes information about setting up a hand-wash station and other practices to improve the safety of gardening in a school setting at: dnr.alaska.gov/ag/FarmToSchool/SGfoodsafetyguide.pdf.

HAND-WASH STATION Use it OFTEN!

Use CLEAN water jugs:

1. **SANITIZE** with 2 tbsp unscented bleach in 1 gallon of water - **SLOSH** to cover all surfaces;
2. Let **STAND 5 minutes** and **DRAIN**. **DO NOT RINSE**; and
3. **FILL** with approved drinking water.

