

# ALASKA GROWN

## Farmer Profile



## Bounty at Bushes Bunches

PALMER—Bruce Bush was born in a barn—literally. Or, if not born in one, at least he was raised in one, albeit a converted one his family moved into in 1956, when they relocated from Palmer to the Butte area.

One year later, “Bushes Bunches” was established. Bush grew up alongside his parents’ crops, but farming wasn’t always Bruce’s main passion. His farming stemmed from financial need— for teenage Bruce was a self-proclaimed “ski bum.” He grew rhubarb and sold it to a processing plant for 10 cents per pound during the summer, so that in the winter he could afford to hit the slopes.

Later, Bush worked as a construction surveyor, until his father died and the farm

declined. Then, he said, “I hung up my plumb bob and picked up my hoe.”

Now, Bush sells his squash, zucchini, snap peas, kale, turnips, and kohlrabi at a stand by the road, farmers’ markets, and at the Alaska State Fair— not to mention to grocery stores and restaurants.

Bush also takes great pride in his crop of peanut potatoes— a name he gave the variety when he was only 8. He even has his own strain of peanut potatoes, named, appropriately, after him.

He now grows more rhubarb than ever, and is one of the founding members of the Alaska Rhubarb Company. The company started in 2010, after Bush had success selling a rhubarb drink at the Alaska State Fair the year before.

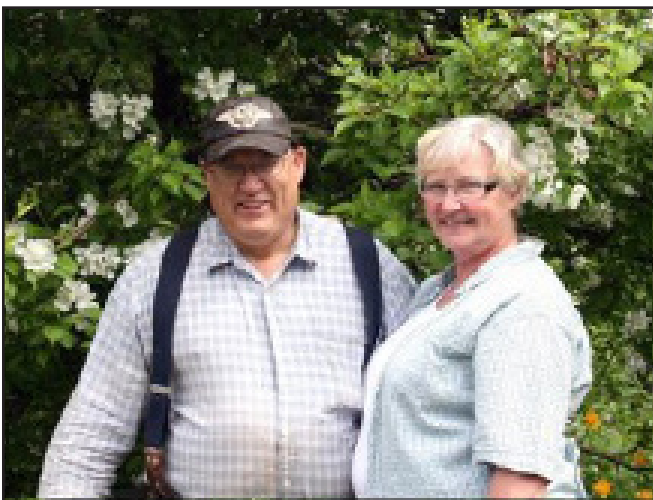
“Alaskan farmers should invest in rhubarb,” Bush said. The cooler

temperatures in Alaska allow for rhubarb to flourish and thrive all summer long, and can be grown well almost anywhere, he claimed.

The Company is attempting to develop and market a rhubarb juice product. The development of such a product could open the door for many farmers to sell their rhubarb to the Company for processing. Farmers in the Matanuska Valley, Kodiak, Kenai Peninsula and Tanana Valley have all expressed interest and have begun expanding their rhubarb patches into fields, Bush said.

Bush thinks that anyone with a little bit of land could and should get involved with farming.

“And chances are,” he said with a grin, perhaps reminiscing on his own childhood, “one of your kids will become a farmer.”



This farmer profile is brought to you by the  
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