

ALASKA GROWN

Farmer Profile



Dinkins: Barber beautifies by farming

FAIRBANKS—It's been ages since Joe Dinkins left his family's South Carolina farm, but he's always carried with him what he learned about growing food at the old home place.

A barber by trade, Dinkins takes on a second "job" in the summer growing vegetables right outside his shop, Just Haircuts, on South Cushman Street. Before and after work he can be found outside working in his garden.

Back home in Rembert, S.C., Dinkins helped tend cotton, peanuts, corn, watermelons, cantaloupe, peas, beans, cabbage, hogs, cows, chickens and geese from the tender age of 5. He traveled around working in construction and restaurants and landed in Alaska in 1968 and in Fairbanks in 1986.

The shop is filled with lush green plants year round and in the summer every available surface outdoors is covered in collards, cabbage, squash, peas, beans, potatoes, tomatoes and even okra.

"I eat some, give some away and sell some," Dinkins said. "I've got plenty of it."

Dinkins said gardening is nothing more than common sense. "When it needs water, water it; when you see weeds, pull them," he said. "If it took an education to have a garden I wouldn't have one."

For Dinkins, growing food is not challenging at all. "It's a fun thing for me," he said. "I do it without thinking about it. Whatever grows grows and what doesn't doesn't; that's OK.

One of Dinkins' objectives

is to beautify his

property; another is to use the veggies as a conversation piece, although the conversations already flow unabashedly at his shop daily. "I like to give the tourists something to talk about," he said, "like giant cabbages."

And even though people are wont to praise Dinkins for his green thumb, he waves away any praise. "I don't want to make a big deal of it," he said. "I just plant stuff, water it and let it go."

"But you've got to weed. Unfortunately, if you're going to have a nice garden you're going to have to weed."

Asked if he plans to continue his efforts, Dinkins smiled. "The garden will be here this year; just drive by and you'll see it."

This story was written by Nancy Tarnai for the University of Alaska Fairbanks. It has been edited and abridged by Rachel Kenley and re-printed with permission.



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Please contact Amy Pettit with questions or comments.

907-761-3864

amy.pettit@alaska.gov