

ALASKA GROWN

Farmer Profile



Mike Emers: The Accidental Farmer

FAIRBANKS — “This happened by accident,” Mike Emers tried to explain.

As a young person growing up in Rhode Island in a family interested in gardening, Emers always expected there would be a garden in his future, but he never imagined he’d one day become a farmer and own Fairbanks’ largest community supported agriculture business.

After settling in Fairbanks as an adult, Emers frequented the Tanana Valley Farmers Market where he formed a friendship with Pete Mayo of Spinach Creek Farm. Mayo convinced Emers to take up farming, which he eventually did, quitting his day

job to launch a flower business in 1997.

He bought 50 acres, cleared some land and set about growing flowers, an endeavor that proved terribly labor intensive. He formed a flower CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) in 1998 and added vegetables in 2002. Gradually his membership has grown to 160.

Customers receive weekly boxes of whatever is ready at the farm from June to September. Rosie Creek provides customers with tips for using the crops and recipes in every package.

Rosie Creek Farm is certified organic, a distinction Emers worked hard to earn. “If you treat

the soil well you will have very few insects and pests,” he said. “I believe strongly in sustainable agriculture and organic agriculture. If you take care of the soil it provides for you.”

What Emers likes best about his career is the connectedness to the community it provides. “I grow food for people,” he said. “That simple connection makes me happy.”

To be a good farmer requires being smart, Emers said. “I’m not sure I’m there yet. You have to manage your time well and know what your limitations are.”

He wishes Fairbanks had more farms and that Alaskans would buy more local food. “Eating good fresh food is a key to health,” he said. “Fairbanks should be feeding itself.”

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