

ALASKA GROWN

Farmer Profile



VanderWeele's are a Staple in the Valley

PALMER - You could say farming runs in the VanderWeele family, Roger is part of the 11th generation of farmers originating in the Netherlands. Ben and Suus Vanderweele moved to the Palmer area in 1967, because farmland in the Netherlands was not readily available. Roger and his siblings were born and raised in Palmer. His childhood chores turned into paid labor which ultimately took him to his full-time job of farming.

Roger attended Palmer High School and then received his Bachelor's of Science in Crop Science from California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. After returning from college he became reacquainted with the farm and 'dug' right in.

The farm is 200 acres about half of which is planted with potatoes, 13 acres is carrots, and the rest is miscellaneous produce. They sell to stores like Fred Meyer and Safeway in Anchorage, Wasilla, Palmer, the Kenai



Peninsula, and Fairbanks. They also sell to the South Anchorage Farmers Market and the NANA native corporation. In a years time they produce about 25 tons of carrots! Roger's favorite part of being a farmer, which he has wanted to be since he was in kindergarten, is working outdoors.

The farm is still a family business; his parents and siblings are all very involved. The whole family agrees that Alaska is a great place to farm because

of the climate. The colder night temperatures cause colder soil temperatures which allow the carrots to have higher sugar content, making them sweeter in taste than those from the lower 48. Not only is this a benefit but also the colder climate requires the use of less pesticides and lower disease rates in plants.

All-in-all the family loves farming and that occupation will not be changing anytime soon. They share the drive and care it takes to run a successful farm and have become a staple in Alaska Grown produce.

This farmer profile is brought to you by the
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