



AK Agriculture Insider

April, 2017

From the Director

Director Arthur Keyes shares on Farmer's Market Growth and celebrating AK Ag Day.

Potato Propagation

How the Plant Materials Center works to provide disease free spud seeds.

Asparagus Trials

The PMC conducts research to determine if this spring vegetable can survive Alaska's winters.

Annual Seed Sale

The Plant Materials Center is holding its annual seed sale on April 19th.

Garden Month

Celebrate your green thumb; April is National Garden month!

Recipe of the Month

In the spirit of Easter we are making an "eggcellent" quiche that is perfect for brunch.

Meet the Team

Get to know our Agricultural Inspector.

Bee Registered

Time to register your bees! It is required by Alaska law.

From the Director

Hello,

Happy Spring! We know this is an especially busy time of year for our producers and growers as you get ready for a successful summer season.

If you haven't heard, our Plant Materials Center (PMC) will be having its annual seed sale of grass, grains and flower seeds on April 19th. This is a great opportunity for commercial seed growers to purchase foundation-level seed, enabling growers to produce and sell certified seed to farmers, landscape companies, revegetation contractors, and construction companies. A list of available species will be posted online at <http://plants.alaska.gov> or you can call (907) 745-1568 for more information.

I was fortunate to be able to attend the annual Alaska Farmer's Market Conference in Homer this Spring. It was phenomenal to see the demand and growth of Farmers Markets across our state. Farmers Markets help strengthen communities, provide a method for local producers to market their products, and enhance the local economy. It's important for us to realize that coordinating and organizing a Farmers Market is a very large task and if you are looking to volunteer your time or get more involved in your community, I would highly encourage you to get involved with your local Farmers Market. We hope to see continued growth, involvement and success of our Farmers Markets here in Alaska.

On May 2nd we will be celebrating Alaska Agriculture Day. This is a perfect opportunity for us to reach out to our schools and communities, and highlight the importance of Agriculture in our lives. There are many ways to do this including: share your agriculture expertise in a classroom, host an open house of your farm, greenhouse or garden, host an Alaska Grown meal at your house, spend some time planting and beautifying the exterior of your workplace, just to name a few ideas. Have fun with it!

Until next time,

Arthur Keyes - Director of Agriculture



Potato Propagation

Although it may still look and feel like winter, the planning and preparation for the upcoming field season is in full swing for the potato program at the Alaska Plant Materials Center (PMC). Tissue culture scale up, or increase for generation zero (G0) greenhouse production is typically a four-month process, beginning in January.

Throughout the year, the PMC maintains four plantlets for each of the 200+ varieties that are in stock. This is called Maintenance Collection. When G0 orders are received, staff calculate the number of plantlets from each of the requested varieties necessary to produce the ordered amount. From the four starting maintenance plantlets (on a monthly cycle) the PMC expects to generate 12 plantlets, and from those 12, they anticipate 36 plantlets, and so on. The last of the propagation cycle is April where the PMC must meet the full greenhouse requirements. In 2017, that will total over 4,000 plantlets representing 38 grower requested varieties.



Potato propagation at the PMC is expected to wrap up in April for the upcoming growing season.



Certified potato seed growers in Alaska produce and sell a myriad of potato varieties of all shapes, colors and purposes.



PMC Seed Sale



Annual Seed Sale Starts Wednesday, April 19th, 2017

A list of available species and their quantities will be posted to the PMC website (<http://plants.alaska.gov>) on April 19th.

Those interested in purchasing seed may place orders by contacting Pete Johnson at the PMC at 745-8105 or peter.johnson@alaska.gov, or by faxing a seed order to 746-1568. Seed will include grass, grain and flower (forb).

Bee Registered

It is time to register your bees!

In accordance with Alaska Law AS 03.47.030 & 11 ACC 35.010 – 35.020) “ALL” bees must be registered in the State of Alaska.

The registration form is available online at the Division of Agriculture website, at: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/Inspection/BeeRegistrationCardMarch2017.pdf>

Hard copies of the application are also available and accepted at the Division of Agriculture located at 1800 Glenn Highway, Suite 12 in Palmer, Alaska.

Feel free to contact us at (907) 745-7200 if you have any questions.



Asparagus Trials

The Plant Materials Center was awarded a Specialty Crop Grant for a research trial on the winter survivability of asparagus in Alaska climates for two growing seasons. Many growers have attempted to grow asparagus throughout the state, and some have been successful while others have not. Asparagus is a perennial crop that can survive for many years. If an asparagus planting is well planned, it can be highly productive for 10-15 years.

The Plant Materials Center established a research trial of 14 varieties of asparagus at three locations in Alaska: Palmer – Southcentral, North Pole – Interior, and Nikiski – Kenai Peninsula. The plant material was sourced from several suppliers in the form of one-year-old crowns and seed. The plot established at the Plant Materials Center in Palmer was a true test of winter conditions. The soil temperatures reached a blistering low of 2.7 F at 6 inches deep and 7.3 F at 12 inches deep. The plants were placed 8 inches deep in the soil and these temperatures were too low for the crowns to survive. The entire plot experienced 100 percent winter kill during the first winter. These low soil temperatures were partly due to the lack of snow cover throughout the winter months.

The site located in North Pole was an area that had been cultivated for many years. The soil was tested and was close to the optimal pH for asparagus; it only had to be amended to raise the pH from 6.5 to 6.8. The Interior of Alaska experienced an early snowfall the first winter, which remained for the entire winter season. The soil temperatures at this location only dropped to 21.5 F for a short period. The average soil temperature for the first winter was 30.1 F and 30.7 F for the second winter.

Several varieties had high survival rates the first winter and continuing through the second winter. The varieties with the highest survival rate were: Jersey Gem – 95%, Del Monte 361 – 90%, Mondeo – 70%, NJ 1122 – 70%, and Jersey Giant – 68%.

Continued on next page...

Asparagus Cont...

In Nikiski, the site was a newly established plot. The soil was amended but not established enough for optimum growing conditions of asparagus. The first winter on the Kenai Peninsula also experienced low snowfall. The soil temperatures were recorded as low as 19.5 F during the first winter. The second winter was mild with an average soil temperature of 32.6 F. The survival rate was lowest during the first winter. Several varieties had above average overall survival rates; Jersey Gem – 83%, Del Monte 361 – 68%, Jersey Giant – 68%, and Sequoia (NJ 1025) – 65%. These survival rates were also influenced by the poor soil quality for asparagus production. The soil for an asparagus planting needs to be amended for a couple of years before planting a perennial crop such as asparagus.

The trial was conducted over two growing seasons and the PMC was not able to collect harvest and yield data from the sites. Asparagus takes three years to mature for harvesting from the time that is seeded. It is difficult to acquire premium stock material in the form of one-year-old crowns. If a grower is able to, it is recommended to start their seedlings in a greenhouse the first year. They can then be transplanted once established or properly stored in a cooler or cold storage for the winter and transplanted the following spring. During this time, the planting site can be prepared in advance before transplanting.

The Plant Materials Center would like to thank Moose Creek Farm and O'Brien Garden & Trees for their hard work and participation during this trial. A final report will be published on the PMC's website this Spring and will be available for download. Please contact rusty.foreaker@alaska.gov for any additional information.



The PMC conducted asparagus trials for two growing seasons in three regions of Alaska.

Recipe of the Month

MANLY QUICHE

(recipe adapted from the Food Network)



Ingredients:

- 3 cups grated, cooked Alaska Grown Potatoes
- 1 tablespoon melted butter
- 1 tablespoon Essence (recipe below)
- 1/4 cup finely grated Parmesan
- 8 ounces hot Italian sausage, removed from casings, crumbled and cooked
- 1 cup thinly sliced onions
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 4 ounces green chiles, roasted, skins and seeds removed, and chopped
- 3 large eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 teaspoon hot pepper sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 cup grated smoked Gouda
- 1/2 cup grated Cheddar
- 1/2 red bell pepper, ribs and seeds removed, and cut into thin rings

Essence (Emeril's Creole Seasoning)

- 2 1/2 tablespoons paprika
- 2 tablespoons salt
- 2 tablespoons garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 1 tablespoon cayenne pepper
- 1 tablespoon dried leaf oregano
- 1 tablespoon dried thyme

Combine all ingredients thoroughly and store in an airtight jar or container.

Yield: about 2/3 cup

Recipe of the Month

- Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F.
- In a bowl, combine the potatoes, melted butter and Essence, and toss to combine. Add the cheese and toss to combine. Press the potato mixture into a 9-inch round glass pan, spreading to evenly cover the bottom and sides. Bake until the potatoes are golden brown, about 25 minutes.
- Remove from the oven and let cool on a wire rack.
- Reduce the oven to 350 degrees F.
- In a large skillet, cook the sausage over medium-high heat, stirring with a spoon to break up the meat, until browned, about 4 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels. Drain off all but 1 tablespoon of the fat. To the fat, add the onions and cook, stirring, until caramelized, 10 to 12 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 30 seconds. Add the chiles and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Remove from the heat and let cool.
- In a bowl, whisk the eggs. Add the milk, cream, hot sauce, salt, and pepper, and whisk until creamy. Add the cheeses and whisk to combine.
- Spread the sausage mixture evenly across the potato crust. Pour the egg-cheese mixture over the filling. Arrange the bell pepper rings across the top. Bake until the custard is set, puffed and golden brown, 25 to 30 minutes.
- Remove from the oven and let cool for 15 minutes before serving. Cut into even slices and serve.

Meet the Team

Please welcome Robert McCall, who has joined the Market Access and Food Safety team as the Agriculture Inspector working on the Good Agricultural Practices Program. Prior to moving to Alaska in 2012 he worked for the Ohio State University Extension system as a Regional Watershed Management Educator for 12 years, the University of Missouri Extension system as a County Agricultural Agent for 3 years, and 2 years with Con-Agra Poultry as a wastewater operator. Robert has enjoyed a diversity of experiences throughout his career and is excited to be working with farmers and food safety planning in Alaska.

Meet the Team Continued...

Robert believes there is a lot of room for agricultural growth in Alaska and is enjoying working with the Division of Agriculture to help make that happen.



Robert McCall brings a very diverse Agricultural background to the Division of Agriculture.

Upcoming Events

April 19th - Seed Sale begins at the Plant Materials Center

April 22nd - Earth Day

May 2nd - Alaska Agriculture Day

Have an event you want us to share? Email the info to:

jennifer.castro@alaska.gov

Celebrate

April is National Garden Month!



Make sure you share the benefits of Alaska Grown gardening on your social media.

#BeSocial with us

