



ALASKA DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE NEWSLETTER

Issue 23 | June 2026

A late, yet hopeful start to growing season



By Director Bryan Scoresby

Summer is here! I love these long days when we can get more work done. At home over the last few nights, I was out working on equipment late into

the evening, getting ready for the hay harvest. It is easier to rise in the morning and get to work on projects with warm weather and natural light. In winter, motivation seems lower for many, who don't want to do work in the dark, early in the morning, or late in the evening.

It seems that this growing season is about two weeks late, according to several farmers across the area. Vegetable farmers in Fairbanks, Nenana, and Palmer have all told me their plantings were delayed by about two weeks. Grain farmers in Delta have planted their crops, but were about two weeks late too. Expectations for harvest are always optimistic. That is what motivates farmers to till the soil, plant seeds, irrigate or pray for rain, harvest a crop, and deliver products for sale.

As we all look forward to harvest, we never know how much or how little Mother Nature will send our way. Livestock must be fed, and they can eat a lot. Three years ago, the Division of Agriculture created a feed-grain reserve after a terrible 2022

growing year. The goal was to put enough grain in reserve to get through the year without very expensive imports. It is comforting, and I am happy to report that the reserve is about 85% full. As a state, we are in a much better position to survive a terrible growing year than we were a few short years ago.

LOOKING BACK

The following report originally appeared in the June, 1952 issue of The Alaska Farmer, published by the Department of Agriculture, Territory of Alaska.

Weather, Past and Present

This year, spring was a long time coming to the Tanana Valley. Actually, it was the coldest May in the history of the weather bureau. Our snowstorm on May 5 quite discouraged many of the farmers who had hoped to have their ground ready within a few days for spring planting.

Mr. Charlie Creamer tells us, however, that worse things have happened in this valley. On May 24, 1931, a big snow froze the potatoes which were already planted in the ground. However, many people replanted and a fair yield was realized.

A snowfall on May 9, 1937, delayed plantings, although the crops that year were successful. Charlie even recalls that in August 1913, there was a slight snowshower.

This information shows that despite the handicap of a late start, the prospects for a bountiful harvest are most encouraging.

Biocontrol organisms approved for Alaska



By Mia Kirk

After several years of collaboration with UAF entomologists and USDA partners, we're pleased to share updates on legally importing biocontrol organisms into Alaska. Companies shipping to Alaska must hold a USDA permit with an approved list of captive-bred (not wild-collected) organisms. Currently, two companies are authorized to ship more than 60 approved biocontrol species to Alaska, offering effective management for greenhouse pests such as aphids, thrips, and mites. For details on suppliers, approved organisms, and their target pests, [please see our handout](#).

Cooking with Alaska Grown

From May through July 4, Alaska Grown is sharing a series of "America's Potluck" recipe videos in celebration of our nation's 250th anniversary. We hope you've enjoyed the dishes so far and will join us in the Alaska Grown \$5 Challenge by incorporating local ingredients into your own



America 250 celebrations. Invite friends and family, support Alaska farmers, and build a potluck menu featuring a variety of Alaska Grown foods. Visit our [social media channels](#) and [YouTube page](#) for recipe ideas.

2026 Agricultural Land Sale now open

The 2026 agricultural land offering is officially open! This year's sale includes 10 parcels in the Nenana-Totchaket area and 9 parcels in the North Fork Micro-Ag area. Bidding opened June 10 and closes September 30 at 4:00 p.m. For full details, visit the [Division of Mining, Land, and Water \(DMLW\) website](#).

Welcome UAF NextGen Intern, Emily Hawley

We're pleased to welcome Emily Hawley, a University of Fairbanks sophomore majoring in Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences and originally from Alamosa, Colorado. Emily will be working with the Agricultural Development team in Palmer, primarily supporting the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) Program. The Alaska CAPS program is federally funded and provides for the early detection of invasive pests and pathogens. This year's surveys include Asian defoliating moths, nursery pests, snails and slugs, and honeybee pests and diseases. Emily will be busy for sure! Learn more about Alaska's CAPS program at https://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_CAPS.htm.



Emily Hawley holds a giant slug in Southeast Alaska this June.

Foundation grains, field-stock potatoes and trail plots successfully planted



By Casey Dinkel

The end of May into the beginning of June finally brought some warmer days, rain showers, and sunshine.

PMC staff were able to take

full advantage of the weather and get all of our foundation grains, field-stock potatoes, and small-grain trial plots in the ground by the last week of May. That said, our field operators continued preparing the ground for foundation grass seed fields at the beginning of June. It is important that our foundation perennial grass seed fields be as clean as possible prior to seeding. Unfortunately, some of the PMC fields have a large weed seed bank that we have been knocking back for several years. Once established, our foundation grass fields will be in production for five or more years, depending on yield, genetic integrity, and weed pressure.

We planted six varieties of foundation perennial grass seed fields in the last week of June. Generally speaking, we will not get a large crop during the first year of growth. Instead, our efforts during the first growing season will focus on plot design, isolation distances between like varieties, and long-term establishment. These fields will supply foundation grass seed to our commercial grass seed growers for many years to come.

During the first week of June, our seed-cleaning agronomist, Dan Coleman, trained with a technician from Delta Technologies in Texas on our new color-sorting line. The color sorter is a new machine we did not have in our toolbox before. This new machine and conveyance will be utilized to clean foundation, registered, and certified small grains such as barley, wheat, oat, and rye. This machine is



capable of separating weed seed, ergot, off-type seed, and immature seed from a small-grain crop. The color sorter uses AI to analyze thousands of color variations per second. With a simple scan of the good seed (keep) and the bad seed (cull), the machine uses air to blow out the unwanted or culls. Having this technology allows us to remove contaminants in the seed that our main line is unable to. The color sorter is a highly valuable tool that will allow us to provide a new cleaning service to our growers throughout Alaska. After a three-day training session, Dan became very familiar with the color-sorting line. Dan processed over half a dozen lots of barley, rye, and oats at a rate of more than one ton per hour.

Last but not least, PMC staff assisted Mickenzie Erickson with our seasonal Generation Zero (G0) planting. Six staff members transplanted 3,600 plantlets into 1200 pots over two days. During the next 16 weeks, these plantlets will produce between six and 800 lbs. of disease-free seed potatoes for our Alaska growers. Of the 1200 pots, 75 different potato varieties will be grown in the G0 green production house this season. This is one of the largest orders of G0 potatoes in recent years, and we are not only excited but thankful to provide this service to Alaska's farmers.

As the summer marches forward, so does the Plant Materials Center. We look forward to a fun and fruitful year.



Planting the Next Generation of Potatoes

Plant Materials Center staff transplant potato plantlets into pots during a two-day planting effort last week. These plantlets will produce disease free minitubers, that serve as the G0 seed potatoes for our potato producers.

