Greenhouse and Nursery Conference Scheduled Jan. 30-31 in Fairbanks

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Green thumbs of all kinds will gather Jan. 30-31 in Fairbanks for the 27th Alaska Greenhouse and Nursery Conference.

Hosted by the UAF Cooperative Extension Service, the conference will attract greenhouse, nursery operators and gardeners from across Alaska. The conference last met in Fairbanks four years ago.

Michele Hebert, a horticulture agent for the Tanana District, said the conference gives growers an opportunity to get current technical information and to network with other growers. While it is geared to commercial operations, she said, about half of those who attend are serious home gardeners.

“It’s for people who are interested in growing plants in Alaska,” said Hebert.

Speakers will cover fern propagation, popular landscape plants, importing and exporting restrictions, marketing, Fairbanks landscape ordinance changes, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation beautification program, invasive pests, beneficial insects and more. Panels also will discuss topsoil and consumer buying preferences.

Hebert said the big draw is guest speaker Chris Beytes, the editor of GrowerTalks magazine and editorial director for Ball Publishing. Beytes has worked in the industry 24 years and travels the world reporting on the latest growing and retailing trends. His biographical information says “he’s been in at least one garden center every weekend since about 1980, when his wife became addicted to plants.”

Cyndie Warbelow-Tack, the owner of The Plant Kingdom, said Beytes is well known in horticulture circles. “He’s really in touch with the horticulture industry on a national and international level,” she said.
Extension Interim Director Pete Pinney will open the conference Jan. 30, followed by Beytes, whose talk is titled, “‘Hot Trends for Growers and Retailers.” Beytes also will moderate the consumer buyers’ panel, which will include a novice and experienced gardeners and a first-time home buyer.

The conference will run from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. both days at the Fairbanks Princess Riverside Lodge. The Polar Grower Trade Show, with information from vendors and various agencies, will go on simultaneously. Registration is $70 for one day and $110 for both. The agenda and registration form are available at www.uaf.edu/ces.

Conference sponsors include the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Inspection Service and the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program.

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