FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Feb. 10, 2011
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The Alaska Produce Growers Conference Feb. 15-16 in Palmer will provide vegetable and fruit growers with the latest research and recommendations.

Conference organizer Stephen Brown, a Palmer agriculture and horticulture agent for the UAF Cooperative Extension Service, said this year’s conference will also include information on Rhodiola rosea, a high-value medicinal plant that is harvested wild in Siberia. Brown said a relative of the plant was discovered in Hatcher Pass and Alaska growers are experimenting with growing it. An Alaska producer who planted 100,000 of these plants in Anchorage believes they can be grown profitably on a small amount of acreage, said Brown.

The grower, Anchorage physician Dr. Petra Illig, received an Alaska Division of Agriculture Innovation Grant to grow the plant and has founded the Alaska Rhodiola Products Cooperative. Illig will lead a rhodiola growers information meeting during the conference.

“This is maybe a new cash crop for Alaska,” Brown said.

Kwesi Ampong-Nyar ko, a research scientist from Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, will talk about research and the commercialization of Rhodiola rosea in Alberta.

Conference speakers will include experts from the university and state and federal farm agencies and producers. Presentations on Feb. 15 will highlight issues of interest to potato growers. Ashok Alva, of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Research Service in Washington state, will talk about the best management of irrigation and fertilization for high yields and quality potatoes. Other topics will include updates on potato disease control, potato research and an Alaska field guide to potato pests. A series of farm safety and health workshops also will be offered.

On Feb. 16, speakers will talk about Rhodiola rosea, composting with fish products, weed research, small fruit growers, a sod harvesting business, vegetable processing and farming off the grid.

The Palmer Community Center at 610 S. Valley Way will host the conference. A schedule and registration form may be downloaded from www.uaf.edu/ces. For more information, contact extension’s Mat-Su/Copper River District office at 745-3360.

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