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Fairbanks, Alaska—The Alaska Produce Growers Conference Feb. 21-22 in Palmer will feature the latest research and recommendations for growers.

Conference organizer Steve Brown, agriculture and horticulture agent for the UAF Cooperative Extension Service, said the annual conference will benefit vegetable and fruit growers with small or large operations. It will also highlight information for growers of Rhodiola rosea, a high-value medical herb that grows in cold regions of the world.

Kwesi Ampong-Nyarko, a research scientist from Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, will return for the second year to talk about Rhodiola research in Alberta. Brown said Rhodiola may be harvested for its roots after four to five years and is considered a low maintenance crop, which makes it attractive, he said. Most Rhodiola is grown in Siberia and Eastern Europe, but a relative of the plant grows in Alaska.

“It’s basically a native plant to this area,” he said.

Dr. Petra Illig, an Anchorage physician who organized a grower cooperative, said the herb is being cultivated in Southcentral, the Kenai Peninsula and the Interior. The first plants could be harvested this fall, she said. The roots are used in remedies to relieve stress.

The other special speaker is Pam Hutchinson, a University of Idaho weed scientist who will talk about potatoes and weeds. Other topics will include pesticide labeling, herbicide control of weeds and the Alaska Farmers Market Food Stamp Pilot Project. The conference will also include a potato update from the Plant Material Center, marketing news from the Alaska Division of Agriculture and other agency updates.

The Palmer Community Center at 610 S. Valley Way will host the conference. See an agenda, register online or download a registration form from www.uaf.edu/ces. For more information, contact Extension in Palmer at 745-3360.

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