Rural gardeners to get training on a working farm

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 24 2012
CONTACT: Debbie Carter, Extension information officer, 907-474-5406, dscarter@alaska.edu

Fairbanks, Alaska — Chad Nordlum started gardening in Kotzebue four years ago because he liked the idea of growing food in a challenging environment.

Gardening also runs in his family. His great-grandfather, who came from Michigan, was known for the turnips he grew in Kotzebue, and his grandfather used a retired boat as a raised bed garden.

Nordlum started with a small garden, added two raised beds and began experimenting with greenhouses. He signed up for the Alaskan Growers School last fall and completed the intensive, distance-delivered course offered by the UAF Cooperative Extension Service.

He and eight other Alaskan Growers School participants will come to the Calypso Farm near Fairbanks July 26-30 to test their knowledge and work on a real farm.

“Although I am not a farmer now, I do hope to be someday,” said Nordlum, who has never been on a working farm.

During the hands-on training, students will be immersed in the lifestyle of farming: eating food grown on the farm, working and even camping on the site. Students will attend from Noorvik, Nome, Bethel, Unalakleet, Ugashik, Two Rivers and Craig.

Project director Heidi Rader said the Alaskan Growers School is an excellent opportunity for individuals who want to become more self-sufficient or start a small farm—wherever they live in Alaska. The school is funded by a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. This is the program’s second year.

The goal of the Alaskan Growers School is to teach Alaska Natives the knowledge and skills to grow enough food for themselves and 10 other families, and advanced training provides information about starting a small agricultural business.

The next Alaskan Growers School will start Sept. 26. Lessons will be offered by teleconference and online. To apply or learn more about the school, go to www.uaf.edu/ces/ags. The school is free and open to everyone, however Alaska Natives in the Tanana Chiefs Conference are given priority. For more information, contact instructor Glenna Gannon at 452-8251 ext. 3281 or Growers.School@alaska.edu.
ADDITIONAL CONTACTS: Heidi Rader, project director of the Alaskan Growers School, 452-8251 ext. 3477 or hbrader@alaska.edu/ces/ags.

ON THE WEB: www.uaf.edu/ces/ags

NOTE TO EDITORS: Media are invited to photograph or interview students of the Alaskan Growers School from 8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. July 30 at Calypso Farm when they will be harvesting. Find directions at www.calypsofarm.org.