Conference will highlight Alaska agriculture

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The Sustainable Agriculture Conference, March 12-13 in Fairbanks, will highlight plant breeding, establishing a farm and producing livestock for fiber and meat.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service will host the 10th annual conference at Wedgewood Resort. More than 30 sessions will cover a variety of topics of interest to farmers, gardeners and ranchers.

The keynote speaker will be James Myers, a professor of vegetable breeding and genetics at Oregon State University. His main interest has been to improve vegetable varieties for disease resistance and nutrition while maintaining quality and productivity. Myers will also lead an all-day preconference workshop March 11 on plant breeding.

Conference coordinator Steven Seefeldt, an Extension agriculture and horticulture agent, said he hopes farmers and gardeners will learn the basics of plant breeding and begin developing improved varieties in Alaska.

“We just have a few varieties of any given vegetable,” he said.

A panel discussion will bring together farmers who wish to expand their operations with representatives of state and federal agencies who will talk about what programs can help farmers and others considering farming. Other conference topics will include getting more locally produced food to market in Fairbanks, mobile slaughter and processing units, high tunnel soil fertility, attracting beneficial insects and pollinators, no-tillage grain production in Delta Junction, pasture management, raising bison, elk and yaks, and more.

A second preconference workshop from 1–3 p.m. March 11 will focus on record keeping and taxes for agricultural businesses. Alaska-grown food will be served during the conference, and educational displays will be available. See the conference agenda and registration information at www.uaf.edu/ces/.

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ON THE WEB: www.uaf.edu/ces/ah/psep/conference
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