

distance

EMBRACING **Technology** TO REACH MORE ALASKANS

MAY BUONGIORNE tends a two-acre garden and raspberry patch in the Dry Creek community, about 40 miles east of Delta Junction.

Some 70 area residents rely on the garden's bounty, so Buongiorne eagerly signed up for the four-month Master Gardener training offered by videoconference in Delta Junction.

While agent Steven Seefeldt taught the class in Fairbanks, Buongiorne and six other gardeners tuned into the weekly videoconference in Delta Junction.

Buongiorne said Seefeldt did a great job of blending plant science and a practical approach. Despite the long commute, Buongiorne said, "It was totally worth it." She felt more confident about gardening last summer, and she used the resources she received.

In addition to the hands-on workshops it is known for, Extension reaches Alaskans in a variety of ways, including the university's videoconference network, online training, audio conferences and other forms of distance delivery.

Agents use the OWL network, with video and webinar connections in libraries across the state, to offer sessions on health and energy topics. The Sitka agent taught a workshop on extending the growing season, which attracted 56 people in nine Southeast libraries.

Since she lives in a remote location, May Buongiorne wishes more classes were offered by distance delivery. "If you get these kinds of opportunities, take them," she advises.



- ❖ Extension used the videoconference network in 2014 to teach small business workshops, a series for individuals interested in starting a specialty foods business, and trainings for pesticide applicators and food protection managers.
- ❖ Thirty-five aspiring farmers from Ketchikan to Aniak participated in the 12-week Alaska Growers School session taught via audioconference or computer.
- ❖ Individuals who wish to become Master Gardeners or 4-H leaders may take the training online.

Program Assistant Marsha Munsell leads a food safety workshop using the university videoconference network in Fairbanks, with participants in Palmer, Barrow, Kodiak and Tok.