

SUCCESS STORIES

Matanuska Experiment Farm and Extension Center

Matanuska Experiment Farm vegetable trials test which varieties thrive in Southcentral

Issue

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, disruptions in Alaska's food supply chain led to food shortages across the state. Many Alaskans decided to grow their own vegetables because of food security concerns. Choosing the right varieties can be challenging because although many varieties are sold, not all do well in Alaska's diverse climate. Also, with the changing climate and growing season, what will grow well now may differ from what has grown well previously.

Response

The Matanuska Experiment Farm and Extension Center participates in vegetable variety trials to help determine which varieties flourish in the Mat-Su area. The trials continue over several years because of the variability of weather. Student worker Shannon Powers grew vegetables and recorded data for the trials in 2020. Shannon worked with UAF variety trials coordinator Glenna Gannon, who is in charge of variety trials in Mat-Su and in Fairbanks. Shannon grew 54 different varieties of vegetables, including beans, beets, carrots, fennel, spinach and winter squash. Data was collected on plant vigor, pest resistance, disease resistance, bolting sensitivity and uniformity. Taste and texture data were also collected on a scale of 1-5 for each variety. Vegetable weights were recorded after dividing them into two categories: marketable and unmarketable. Altogether, 755.16 pounds of marketable vegetables and 210.64 pounds of unmarketable vegetables were harvested.

Results

Once the vegetables have been tested sufficiently, results will be published and guide new and seasoned gardeners in their seed selection process. Results from the trials will be published on the Agricultural and Forestry Experiment



Winter squash grow in a Matanuska Experiment Farm greenhouse for the vegetable variety trials.



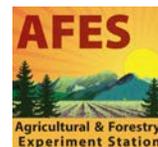
Shannon Powers stands among the winter squash and fennel she planted at the farm.

Station website at <https://bit.ly/Varietytrials> and a Cooperative Extension publication on the recommended varieties for Southcentral will be updated. The current publication of "Recommended Variety List for Southcentral Alaska" is available at <http://bit.ly/1kEIVSN>. The trials also contributed to Mat-Su food security. The vegetables were given to the Alaska Tilth program, which donated the vegetables to Kids Kupboard and local food banks.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Shannon Powers

Student Worker
Matanuska Experiment Farm and
Extension Center
stpowers@alaska.edu
907-746-9485



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