

# Professional Development Training in Sustainable Agriculture in Alaska

## Michele Hébert – (Alaska – Professional Development Program Grants)

**Title:** Professional Development Training in Sustainable Agriculture in Alaska

**Coordinator:**

Michele Hébert  
Tanana District  
Agriculture and Horticulture Agent  
Cooperative Extension Service  
University of Alaska  
P.O. Box 75-8155  
Fairbanks, AK 99775-8155  
907.474.2423  
[mahebert@alaska.edu](mailto:mahebert@alaska.edu)



**Context and Overview:**

Michele Hébert, Professor of Agriculture at the University of Alaska, has served as the Alaska State Professional Development Coordinator for the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program since 1993.

As Alaska SARE coordinator, she is responsible for carrying out training and education in the concepts of agricultural sustainability in concert with her work as the Tanana District Agriculture and Horticulture Agent.

In Alaska, says Hébert, sustainable agriculture thrives and is the main way of doing business. The typical farm is a small family farm that has found ways to diversify to survive. Because there are few pests in Alaska, farmers have little reliance on pesticides.

In addition, energies are focused on building rural farming communities in places like Nenana, Delta Junction, Point Mackenzie and Soldotna.

Hébert says several methods are being used to strengthen the SARE program and agricultural sustainability in Alaska, including:

- Tours of farms where producers are implementing innovative farming practices
- Educational programs that build an understanding of, and reduce reliance on, pesticides
- Networking and education through newsletters
- Encouraging farmers to get more involved in sustainable agriculture practices through grants.

“The long-term sustainability of Alaska’s agriculture community will depend upon cooperation and sharing of information among ourselves,” says Hébert.

Sustainable Agriculture in Alaska: <http://www.uaf.edu/coop-ext/SARE/>

**Personal:**

Hébert, who has been with the University of Alaska since 1990, earned a Bachelor of Science degree in horticulture from Louisiana State University in 1976 and did graduate work in rice diseases in 1977. She received a Masters Degree in secondary education in 1984.

At the University of Alaska, Hébert was granted tenure and promoted to Associate Professor in 1997 and was promoted to full Professor in 2002.

**Teaching topics:**

- Horticulture
- Master Gardener Program
- Pesticide Safety

**Areas of Focus:**

- Invasive Species
- Integrated Pest Management
- Nutrient Management
- Composting



Michele Hébert at Rosie Creek Farm in Ester.

**Hébert is the author or co-author on these publications, and more:**

- Carrots in Alaska
- Vegetable and Fruit Varieties for Interior Alaska
- Ask for Alaska Grown
- Air Layers to Renew Indoor Plants
- Roses – Growing and Overwintering Tender Varieties
- Vegetable Storage in Root Cellars and Basements in Alaska
- Alaska Gardeners Manual (with CD)
- Composting with Worms



Hébert participated in the Hawaii Subregional Conference in October 2008, where she served as a facilitator with this group for a roundtable discussion.



**Outreach:**

Hébert excels in the use of media to reach clientele.

For more than 10 years, she hosted a television show called Garden Tips on the local station, Channel 11. The show was aired right before the weather every night on the 6 and 11 p.m. news.

Hébert also produces two newsletters, manages four websites, oversees six listservs and writes a regular newspaper column.

**Contributions:**

Her most significant recent public service program has been the establishment of the Alaska Invasive Species Working Group in 2007. Hébert directed the drafting of a Memorandum of Understanding for establishment and support of the working group and chairs the statewide committee.

Over 48 federal and state agencies, local municipalities and private entities attended the first organizational meeting and now meet annually at the Alaska Invasive Species Conferences, which she organizes and oversees.

In addition, Hébert is responsible for the:

- Statewide Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference
- Sustainable Agriculture Listserv
- Sustainable Agriculture for Alaska Quarterly Newsletter – available online at: <http://www.uaf.edu/coop-ext/newsletters>; the publication is mailed to 500 individuals with federal agencies (NRCS, ARS, FSA) state agencies (Division of Agriculture, Plant Material Center), university personnel (CES, SNRAS) and interested individuals and producers



One of Hébert's Master Gardener classes.