

Training Alaska Master Gardeners as First Detectors

Michele Hebert and Cathy Turner, UAF Cooperative Extension

The large state of Alaska boasts a large portion of small, remote communities. With but a few Extension agents and other specialist employees located in only a handful of larger communities, Alaska already relies heavily on Master Gardeners to assist the UAF Cooperative Extension Service detect pest outbreaks.

In 2008, the Alaska WPDN developed a First Detector program specifically geared to train Alaskan Master Gardeners to detect pests of high consequence to Alaska. Training goals focus on teaching students to recognize and report abnormal pests while expanding the number of communities with First Detectors.

Goals of Alaska WPDN Training:

- Train diverse group of First Detectors.
- Expand MG expertise in pest ID.
- Expand the number of remote communities with first detectors.
- Develop a training specific for Master Gardeners.

Trained participants include:

- Alaska Master Gardeners
- Commercial Ag. Producers
- USDA Forest Service and APHIS
- Soil & Water Conservation District
- Dept. of Environmental Conservation
- Alaska Division of Agriculture
- Extension Agents

Highlighted topics

- High risk pests for AK
- Handling specimens
- Beneficial insect ID
- Insect and disease ID
- Hands on activities
- Classroom presentations
- Guest agency speakers



Students examine Alaskan insects and learn about insect taxonomy and ID.



Participants practice handling and packaging various types of specimens.

