



HOTHOUSE HORTICULTURIST — Jim Wilson is the director for a year long experiment at Wildwood School to see if the Alaskan agricultural yield can be increased by improvements in controlled environment growing techniques.

— Photo by MARGIE BAUMAN

Wildwood School To Grow Experimental Salad

KENAI — Garden vegetables may grow to extraordinary size beneath the summer sun in Alaska, but summer is short in the 49th state, leaving need for vast improvements in use of available farmlands.

With this in mind, an experiment gets under way at the Wildwood School near Kenai soon, to see how agriculture may be improved in a controlled environment.

Under controlled conditions, the yield per acre may be much higher, "but we want to determine if it's economically feasible," said Jim Wilson, director of the controlled environment project at Wildwood.

The project, under study for a year now, is scheduled to run over a 24-month period and cost \$3.2 million. The initial \$821,013 grant was made by the federal Office of Economic Opportunity to the Kenai Native Association, for the fiscal period ending in June, 1974.

The experiment itself will be directed primarily by the University of Alaska under contract with General Electric, said Wilson. The university signed a contract Sept. 21 with G.E. for \$142,000 to conduct the experiments with salad vegetables.

The remainder of the funds will go for construction of facilities and hiring costs for the experiment. Construction of modules for the experiment is to get

under way within six weeks.

There will be nine modules in all, each controlling light, nutrition and other necessities to the garden vegetables.

"It's greenhouse concept, but it's more than that," Wilson said.

He's been working on the project for about a year now and ultimately Kenai Native Association may hire about 20 persons to work in this field, he said.

Right now, "we're looking for Native students interested in horticulture, in becoming horticulture technicians and in middle management in horticulture related fields, he said. Those interested may write Wilson, c/o Kenai Native Association, CEA Project, Kenai, Alaska.