



Wisconsin Specialty Crop Block Grants Awarded for 19 Projects

Release Date: December 16, 2020

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MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) today announced 19 projects have been selected to receive \$1,186,278 in Specialty Crop Block Grant funding. These recipients were selected from a total of 36 funding requests totaling \$2,550,444. Grants are awarded to projects intended to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crop industries through research, education or market development. Recipients are required to provide 25 percent of the grant funds as a matching contribution.

Funding for Specialty Crop Block Grants is provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), which defines specialty crops as fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture.

“These grants benefit Wisconsin’s specialty crop industries in a variety of ways, from pest and pathogen mitigation to innovation, education, and marketing efforts. We are pleased to help support a range of diverse specialty crop initiatives once again,” said DATCP Secretary-designee Randy Romanski.

The funded projects are:

- University of Wisconsin (Madison)
 - Investigate the effects of deicing salts on prairie plants planted along highways, and using woody plants and prairie grasses as living snow fences.
 - Develop aphid flight phenology models to limit the spread of Potato virus Y, a non-persistently transmitted viral pathogen of seed potatoes.
 - Develop a better understanding of how honey bee hive health and success vary across Wisconsin due to variations in land cover and weather conditions.
 - Conduct vegetable variety trials in field and high tunnel greenhouses to improve vegetable production, profitability, and quality in northern Wisconsin.
 - Mitigate threats posed by emerging black leg and soft rot pathogens to seed potatoes.
 - Assess the use of mass trapping as an environmentally-friendly and sustainable option for managing wasps in Wisconsin vineyards.
 - Investigate new genetic and chemical control options for Cercospora Leaf Spot disease of table beet in conventional and organic production.
 - Perform a storage study and conduct on-farm surveys to explore the use of thermal imaging to manage potato post-harvest storage and provide strategies to maintain storage quality.
 - Conduct research on the biology, risk, and management of viruses affecting iris production and disseminate information to growers through outreach events and materials.
 - Increase sales of apples to institutions (K-12 schools, hospitals, early care centers, and colleges) by leveraging the Great Lakes Great Apple Crunch to provide direct training, technical assistance, and outreach materials.

- Increase the amount and variety of Wisconsin-grown fruits and vegetables provided in schools by developing a statewide Farm to School Harvest of the Month program featuring 24 Wisconsin specialty crops.
- Bring together beginning farmers, including women, to provide training in growing and marketing elderberry and coordinate discussions on developing an elderberry growing hub/cooperative.
- University of Wisconsin (River Falls) – Fund a one-year extension request to compare the effectiveness of lithium chloride salt treatment to control a devastating parasitic mite of honey bees and vector of honey bee viruses.
- University of Wisconsin (Whitewater) – Investigate the wild bergamot plant as a specialty crop by conducting a market and feasibility study and creating a business and operating plan with the Oneida Nation.
- Ginseng Board of Wisconsin (Marathon City) – Test fungicides and biorationals to determine if the destructive Phytophthora rot pathogen in ginseng has developed resistance to the newer fluopicolide fungicide.
- Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association (Wisconsin Rapids) – Increase public awareness and favorability of the cranberry industry by creating display materials and engaging, educational content to share on multiple platforms.
- Savannah Institute (Madison) – Stimulate market demand, supply chain development, and on-farm production of black currants by educating growers and the public via field days, taste evaluations, recipe and product development, and online and print resources.
- Wisconsin Apple Growers Association (Waterloo) – Increase the demand for and sales of Wisconsin apples through a targeted “Flavored by Wisconsin” campaign promotes the state’s apple heritage and diversity while building on the reputation of the apple for quality and versatility.
- FairShare CSA (Madison) – Work with farmers and partners to address labor management needs of diversified organic vegetable growers with a training program designed to help farmers attract workers, manage labor effectively, strengthen financial viability, and improve quality of life.

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