

West Virginia Department of Agriculture

Walt Helmick, Commissioner



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NEWS RELEASE
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WEST VIRGINIA SPECIALTY CROP PROJECTS AWARDED MORE THAN \$200,000 IN GRANT FUNDS

Charleston, W.Va. – The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) awarded 10 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grants to applicants in West Virginia. The amount of those grants totals \$222,139.83. The money will be used to enhance the production, processing and consumption of specialty crops within West Virginia.

"I couldn't be more pleased with this announcement," said West Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture Walt Helmick. "From research to education, production to promotion, these grants will allow small farms and research facilities to do important work. Whether it's testing out a new crop or developing disease resistant varieties of traditional produce, everyone in West Virginia will benefit."

Those receiving grants include:

West Virginia State University Research Corporation - \$25,000

"Developing, Processing and Demonstration Research for Hops Growers in WV"

The goal is to increase the amount of hops grown in West Virginia for use in local breweries.

West Virginia University Research Corporation - \$8,053

"Evaluating Hazelnuts as an Alternative Specialty Crop in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia"

The objective is to establish and evaluate 15 hazelnut hybrid varieties at the WVU Kearneysville Tree Fruit Station in Jefferson County.

West Virginia University Research Corporation - \$15,204

"Incorporation of Disease Resistance in Tomato Variety 'WV 63'"

The project will cross conventional tomato varieties with the 'WV 63' tomato to increase its disease resistance. Hybrid lines will be selected for extensive field screenings.

Blue Ridge Community & Technical College - \$21,035.10

"I Can Grow My Own Food – Nutritional Information for Middle School Students"

Middle school students in Jefferson and Berkeley Counties will visit the BRCTC on-campus high tunnel to learn about growing strawberries and eating local specialty crops for a healthier diet.

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West Virginia Farmers Market Association - \$3,000

“Passport to Produce: A West Virginia ‘Power of Produce’ Farmers Market Youth Program”

The WVFMA program is aimed at introducing West Virginia youth to specialty crops and developing healthy eating habits using locally grown fruits and vegetables. The program will collect data, track participants eating habits and changes towards healthier diets.

Morgantown Christian Academy - \$5,039.86

“Morgantown Christian Academy Education and Nutrition Garden”

The school will establish a nutrition and education garden to increase children’s knowledge and consumption of specialty crops using hands-on learning.

West Virginia Wesleyan College - \$25,000

“Wesleyan Greenhouse Effect”

Partnering with Aladdin Food Service, the college, and its students, will construct a high tunnel to grow specialty crops. The food will be available to students.

West Virginia Maple Producers Association/WV Department of Agriculture - \$65,000

The WVMPPA will partner with the WVDA to continue syrup industry development in West Virginia. The project will provide an educational series as well as consumer input and research. It will also research the ability to use public lands for maple syrup production.

Cedar Lakes Conference Center/WV Department of Agriculture - \$15,000

“High Tunnel and Season Extension Production: A Hands On Classroom for West Virginia Growers”

The program will establish a year-round, hands-on high tunnel classroom at Cedar Lakes for workshops and field days on how to manage and profit from high tunnel production techniques.

West Virginia Department of Agriculture - \$39,807.87

“Specialty Crop Education and Support in WV”

The WVDA will facilitate programs and training aimed at providing specialty crop producer education throughout the state.

The 2017 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant request for proposals will be released in mid-November. If you would like to be notified, contact Cindy Martel at cmartel@wvda.us or 304-558-2210.

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