

Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: Announces 2021 specialty crop block grant recipients

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MADISON, Wis. - The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) announced 15 projects have been selected to receive more than \$1.16 million in USDA Specialty Crop Block Grants. These recipients were selected from 19 funding requests totaling more than \$1.48 million.

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 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which defines specialty crops as fruits, 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 continue supporting Wisconsin’s thriving specialty crop industry through these important projects,” said DATCP Secretary Randy Romanski.

The grant recipients and their projects are:

DATCP’s Division of Agricultural Resource Management

- Survey the potato growing regions of Wisconsin for the presence of Potato Mop Top Virus. (\$25,747.59)

- Expand on past work to improve honey bee health and reduce hive mortality. (\$67,919.97)

Ginseng Board of Wisconsin

- Conduct field research to ensure exported fresh ginseng roots will meet pesticide residue standards established by Taiwan. (\$99,920)

Savanna Institute

- Stimulate farmer adoption of chestnuts in Wisconsin. (\$81,514.28)

Two Onion Farm

- Evaluate cordon trellis system of growing currants and gooseberries as a method to reduce labor needs and improve fruit quality. (\$41,900)

University of Wisconsin (Madison)

- Improve understanding of how variation in the landscape influences the quality of pollen collected by honey bees. (\$99,868)
- Develop an open-source web-based tool for in-season potato yield predictions at the field scale to improve irrigation management and provide dissemination or research results. (\$99,745)
- Increase vegetable crop production and quality by reducing competition with weeds through the timely, practical, and affordable use of natural plant hormones that enhance crop growth and eliminate early season weeds. (\$97,067)
- Explore the microbiome in relation to potato and vegetable crop, soil health, and productivity (\$90,000)
- Reduce economic impact of potato tuber necrotic viruses. (\$92,171)
- Assess and optimize hot water treatments of cranberry vine cuttings as an environmentally friendly and sustainable option for the management of fruit rot fungi in Wisconsin cranberry marshes. (\$82,422)
- Evaluate performance of new table grape varieties by establishing replicated performance trials. (\$74,133)
- Perform a two-year study at the University of Wisconsin Hancock Agricultural Research Station to explore use of hyperspectral remote sensing technology to monitor in-season plant nutrient status and predict end-of-season yield of three processing vegetables. (\$69,489)

- Assess impact of attract-and-kill as an alternative management strategy for Japanese beetle to reduce this pest's population while reducing environmental impact and non-target effects on pollinators. (\$62,521)

Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association

- Raise awareness of cranberries and the cranberry industry to produce more demand for the crop through education on the history, current state, and future of the cranberry industry. (\$83,029)

Since 2009, DATCP has received 441 Specialty Crop Block Grant proposals requesting more than \$27.2 million. The USDA has funded 286 of those grant project proposals, totaling more than \$14 million. For more information on Specialty Crop Block Grants, visit [DATCP's website](#).