

The Honorable Don Ament

Commissioner
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Base Grant: \$500,000
Specialty Crop Grant: \$1,510,000
Total Grant: \$2,010,000

The Specialty Crops Program at Colorado State University has been established by a grant from the Colorado Department of Agriculture to increase support for growers seeking alternatives to traditional cropping systems, increase the viability of established specialty crop producers, and also for a rapidly growing number of small farm enterprises which often are initiated by novice farmers. In Colorado this represents a varied collection of crops, including fruit, vegetable, nursery, ornamental, turf, herb and pharmacological crops.

It is the goal to represent all of these groups through research and education programs. A very significant part of the Specialty Crops Program's focus is on providing Grower Research and Education Grants. These competitively awarded grants are made to individual growers and grower organizations to do on-farm research into specific production issues, value-added opportunities, feasibility studies, and marketing studies. Individual growers may receive up to \$10,000 and groups of growers or an organization may receive up to \$25,000. Most of the grants have been awarded for single-year projects, but a few multi-year grants have also been awarded. All participants are required to share the costs of the projects.

In 2002, seventeen grants totaling \$140,000 were awarded. In 2003 four multi-year projects are to be continued, and an additional twelve new projects have been funded totaling \$115,000.

2002 Projects

Vegetable Crop Production Projects:

- Chimney Rock Farm developed a small farm business plan for direct marketing in the southern mountains of the state.
- Tres-Rios Cooperative studied organic fertility management, cucurbit seed production and sweet potato variety evaluation in southern Colorado.

- Yucca Ridge Farm studied cold storage effects on culinary and seed viability of stiff neck garlic varieties in northern Colorado.
- Berry Patch Farm evaluated flame and steam cultivation methods for use in plasticulture systems.
- The biology and IPM options were studied to manage a new pest (sap beetle) in western Colorado sweet corn.
- Drip irrigation using poor quality saline water to produce peppers was studied in southeastern Colorado, where severe drought conditions have required growers to become innovative in production techniques.

Fruit Crop Projects:

- Studies to develop production systems for strawberry transplant are on-going in western Colorado.
- The impact different green manures have on organic orchard fertility is part of a three year study in western Colorado.
- Modeling environmental conditions for management of powdery mildew on wine grapes is part of a three year study in western Colorado.

Herb Production Projects:

- A feasibility study of catnip production for herbal extraction and production of insect repellent was started in 2002 and will continue in 2003
- A feasibility of study of hops production for micro-and home brewing industry, and use as a shade crop for sheep will be a 3 year project in western Colorado.

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2002 PROJECTS:

Continued...

Marketing & New Product Development:

- Development of new hot sauce products, using locally grown peppers in southern Colorado.
- Identifying market barriers and opportunities for organic fruit producers in western Colorado.

2003 Projects

Vegetable Crop Production Projects:

- Harvest timing of stiff neck garlic for best quality, and evaluation of garlic greens as a niche crop.
- Evaluation of seedless watermelon production on poly in the Arkansas Valley.
- Jalapeno pepper production system evaluation/ feasibility on poly in the Arkansas Valley.
- Use of tunnel greenhouses for season extension on small vegetable farm.

Fruit Crop Production Projects:

- Pepper transplant evaluation of performance.
- Season extension with the use of poly-tunnels.

Ornamentals Projects:

- Evaluation of drought tolerance of annual flowers- Denver and Ft Collins.

Marketing & New Product Development:

- Colorado potato-product differentiation.

Other projects, which SCP has worked on and will be involved with in the coming year:

- Colorado Nursery Association presentation on increasing irrigation efficiency in nursery production.
- Adams County Cooperative Extension Service; presentation on greenhouse IPM training.
- A two day short course on organic vegetable seed production at CSU.
- Demonstration gardens at CSU's Plant Environmental Research Center.
- Vegetable and small fruit variety trials and observation plantings at CSU.

- Garlic over wintering, and irrigation management trials at CSU's Horticultural Research Center.
- Collaboration with Cooperative Extension Service and Agricultural Experiment Station projects.
- Development of a library and resource center for those interested in learning more about specialty crops.
- Development of a web-site with information about CSU's Specialty Crops Program, projects underway, and opportunities for growers, and links to other pertinent information.