

Volume 1, Issue 1

August 2011



NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Nevada SCBGP Awarded Project

Nevada Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

by Ashley Jeppson

Since 2006 the Nevada Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, has funded over 40 projects that have identified and addressed various constraints that impact specialty crop production in Nevada.

The Nevada Department of Agriculture accepts annual proposals for projects that increase the competitiveness of specialty crops through research, education, production, food safety, marketing initiatives, farm-to-school programs, and more. Applications are reviewed competitively and funding is awarded to top-scoring candidates to implement projects. Projects must benefit more than one individual or organization and work towards enhancing the program. Additional information regarding eligibility can be found at www.agri.nv.gov

Since the start of the program the following projects have been awarded:

Western Nevada College, Specialty Crop Institute has received SCBGP sub-awards to provide workshop trainings to producers involving specialty crop production, marketing, distribution, soil management, cooperatives, community supported agriculture initiatives, and farmers'

market involvement. Workshops have included expert speakers from Utah, Washington, California, Colorado, Nevada, and Oregon to educate participants on various effective growing and marketing campaigns. Workshops have encouraged new growers, increased the sustainability of producers, and better equipped Nevada producers to compete with large-scale specialty crop producers from other states. The workshop curriculum was geared to address constraints that new and small-scale farmers experience in Nevada to help increase the success of specialty crop producers. For details on upcoming workshops visit www.wnc/ce/sci/.

(Cut flowers workshop)



Smith Valley Specialty Crop Laboratory Production Garden, coordinated a school garden program that emphasized class room and field education. The garden plot provided education regarding production, harvesting, marketing, landscaping, and preparing food for community



events. Students of all ages were involved in coordinating the garden and maintained journals to record what was learned throughout the project. This project provided education on producing specialty crops, established a written curriculum, and encouraged future growers to produce specialty crops.

NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Katie Jameson
SCBG Program Coordinator
(775)353-3639
kjameson@agri.nv.gov

Ashley Jeppson
SCBG Assistant Program Coordinator
(775)353-3675
ajeppson@agri.nv.gov

We grow things here!



Research & Education Projects

Alfalfa King/Hartman Ranch was awarded SCBGP funding to research grape and lavender growth in Dyer, Nevada by implementing test plots. Mark Hartman attended workshops, corresponded with experienced growers, and performed independent research to optimize the success of growing these crops in Nevada's harsh climate. Once plants were established three schools in Esmeralda County received a tour and lesson regarding grape and lavender production. Deep Springs College received hands on training involving pruning and securing grape vines at the plot site. Following the completion of the project a presentation was made to the public in Fish Lake Valley detailing the overall project, the benefits of converting to water efficient crops, and how future projects can be implemented.



(Esmeralda County School Tour)

Organic Vegetable Transplant Production from Recycled Organic Waste, was coordinated by Hungry Mother Organics to develop a system for integrating the recycling of local organic waste into the production and marketing of organic vegetable transplants. The project incorporated education involving organic crop production utilizing a variety of compost and growing techniques. Project Lead, Mark O'Farrell, established composting and recycling at three large scale grocers in the Northern Nevada area (Whole Foods, Trader Joes, and Lira's Market). Compost was then utilized by local growers to increase soil nutrients

and enhance produce flavor. This project educated numerous individuals on organic production, composting, marketing, irrigation, and seed establishment for specialty crops.

Pilot Study of Berry and Bean Production in Northern Nevada, was coordinated by Friends of Nevada Organics to research blueberry and bean growth through High Desert Montessori School in Reno, Nevada. This project incorporated high tunnel blueberry and bean production with 7th and 8th grade students. Students participated in planting, distributing soil amendments, irrigation, growth observations, and recording hoop house conditions. Students were able to develop skills in conducting scientific

Test Plots in Schurz, Nevada, was awarded funding to research wine grape growth in Schurz, Nevada. Two grape test plots were set up in the nutrient deficient soil to determine which growing conditions were more efficient for grape production in this region of Nevada. Alternative plants were grown with the vines which provided additional nutrients to the soil and protected vines from herbivory. Locals were informed regarding the benefits of producing a water efficient crop compared to the prevalent alfalfa. A workshop was later coordinated to educate the public regarding the project, what was achieved, growing constraints encountered, and production techniques that would be useful for interested growers.

research and specialty crop growth. This project will expand to the Urban Roots site to further research growth under different conditions. Local schools will be able to utilize the additional site and curriculum for future field trips.



(School Planting Day)

Marketing/Distribution Initiatives for Specialty Crop Producers

Community Value-Added Processing in Lincoln County, was awarded funding to create a processing facility in Lincoln County that will allow producers to process value-added food products for commercial sale. This project will greatly decrease the amount of crop waste throughout the growing season due to spoiling and will provide another source of revenue for specialty crop producers. Products that may not be visually appealing at the markets

can be converted to a value-added product that will remain viable. This project will allow specialty crop products to be made available outside of the growing season as jarred, baked, or dried goods. Producers will be educated regarding value-added processing health regulations, recipes, label development, and reducing crop waste. The knowledge gained in developing the facility will be outlined and made available for producers growing spe-

cialty crops in other small communities throughout Nevada.



Churchill Economic Development Authority was awarded funding to create a farmers' collaborative for specialty crop producers in Northern Nevada. The goal of this project was to increase small farm participation in Nevada's farmers' markets. The collaborative helped small farmers obtain booth space and marketing materials to promote local specialty crop producers that otherwise would not have enough products to retain income. Through establishing the collaborative Nevada producers were given a greater opportunity to compete with California producers. This project will increase market participation, crop production, promotion of specialty crops, and farmer recognition.

The Great Basin Basket Expansion project established the Great Basin basket CSA uniting numerous Northern Nevada farmers in coordinating a basket program that offers a large array of specialty crops from various farmers. This project allowed small scale producers to get their product to the consumer in order to establish farm recognition and provide income to producers. New producers were educated on how to coordinate a successful CSA program specific to their operation size. Basket content was varied to evaluate consumer needs in order to adapt to the current market. The projects primary objective was to assist farmers in entering a relatively new marketing channel and test new product development. A guide was later published detailing how to suc-

cessfully start a CSA that reflects production size and type.

The Great Basin Food Cooperative (GBFC) was awarded funding to establish a farmers' network through hosting the annual "Love Your Farmer" dinner meeting. This allowed producers to identify consumer needs, prevent overproduction of a single crop, and increase crop variety in the markets. Additionally the GBFC has promoted local producers, hosted student workshops, and increased the distribution of specialty crops. This



project has increased the overall sales of specialty crops, farmer recognition, and consumer education throughout Nevada.

(Great Basin Food Cooperative)

Farmer Distribution and Access Location, was awarded funding to coordinate a distribution center for local specialty crop producers, restaurants, retailers, etc. A consistent distribution site will be provided through the Great Basin Food Cooperative which will provide access to goods on a regular basis. This project will establish a more efficient Farm-to-Chef

program, promote specialty crop producers, and will allow consumers to find or request certain products.

NevadaGrown coordinated by the Churchill Economic Development Authority and the Nevada Association of Counties was awarded to coordinate a branding and marketing campaign for Nevada grown specialty crop products. Funds were awarded to create NevadaGrown logo merchandise to identify Nevada producers and to establish a NevadaGrown website promoting various farms. The objective of this project was to unite local producers, consumers, retailers, and restaurants seeking to participate in the "buy local" initiative. Through creating and utilizing media sources, numerous specialty crop producers have become aware of the benefits of marketing in order to inform the public of their farm and products. By establishing marketing campaigns Nevada producers, restaurants, and consumers have increased their role in the Nevada grown food distribution system.



Promoting Specialty Crop Producers

Tractors & Truffles, was awarded funding to advertise for the farm-to-plate Tractors & Truffles event in Fallon, Nevada which will help increase awareness of Northern Nevada specialty crop producers. This event showcases the small farm agriculture industry in Fallon, growing trends towards the consumption of locally grown foods, and gourmet eating utilizing specialty crops. Activities will demonstrate rural farming relative to local consumption and food production. Specialty crop producers, restaurants, chefs, and consumers interested in fresh, locally grown produce will be united prompting an increase in specialty crop production.

Doubletree Ranch was awarded funding to coordinate a Lovelock Farmers' Market to promote local growers and encourage the production of specialty crops in an alfalfa rich, rural community. Hoop house production in the Lovelock area was researched along with the production of various specialty crops in order to increase the sustainability of specialty crop growth in this area. Produce was sold for various farmers and advertising was implemented to promote local specialty crop growers. This project demonstrated that specialty crop growth is feasible for transitioning farmers, is water efficient, and can be successfully sold with proper marketing.

Promoting Specialty Crop Producers through the GBFC.

The GBFC was awarded additional funding to develop signage for specialty crop producers during the GBFC building expansion. Prior to moving into the larger building located on the corner of Court and Flint street, the GBFC was distributing specialty crops for over 30 producers out of a 500 square foot building. Due to the size constraints establishing farmer recognition was difficult. Funding will provide in-store signage that will identify where the product was grown, farmer back-ground, and growing methods utilized. This will help increase the sale of specialty crops, encourage marketing by small-scale farmers, and establish a reputation for producers based on the quality of their product.