

## **Specialty Crop Production in Northern Wisconsin**

*The citizens of Northwest Wisconsin request:*

**We request that the State of Wisconsin match the federal Specialty Crop Block Grant Program with State funding in order to increase the amount of funding and size of awards granted for specialty crop research and development in Wisconsin. In addition, we request that not less than 10% of the funds be allocated to projects in Northwest Wisconsin.**

**Reason for the request:** The South shore of Lake Superior creates an ideal micro-climate for growing a broad range of fruit crops. The Bayfield fruit growing region alone has seen revenues double in the last five years. With a growing agri-tourism economy and a changing climate there are opportunities to grow established fruit crops on larger acreage and a wider variety of fruit crops, but research is needed as to the best varieties and production systems.

In addition, there are two emerging crops being developed in Northern Wisconsin by researchers with the University of Wisconsin, hazelnuts and high bush cranberry, that have significant potential as major oilseed crops in the North.

The Specialty Crop Block Grant program is administered by the Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection that awards federal funds to researchers throughout Wisconsin. The funds are limited, short in duration, and single award sizes are typically \$30,000 or less. A more robust Specialty Crop Block Grant program would allow for the larger awards and longer contracts needed for specialty crop research and development. By matching the federal dollars, the State could improve and increase specialty crop production without additional overhead of administering a new program.

By adding geographic preference to the grant program, the State could more effectively support areas in Wisconsin with underdeveloped potential for specialty crop production, such as the South shore of Lake Superior.

### **Contact information:**

**Name: Jason Fischbach**

**Affiliation: UW-Extension**

**Title: Agriculture Agent**

**Address: PO Box 218, Washburn, WI, 54891**

**Phone: 715-373-6104 ext 5**

**Email : Jason.fischbach@ces.uwex.edu**