



**NEWS RELEASE**  
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## **Grants awarded to grow Indiana's specialty crop sector**

**INDIANAPOLIS (Dec. 20, 2017)** — The Indiana State Department of Agriculture ([ISDA](#)) awarded more than \$400,000 to six projects aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of Indiana's specialty crops, funded through USDA's [Specialty Crop Block Grant program](#). Specialty crops include fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops (including floriculture).

“Our state has a diverse specialty crop industry that families in rural, urban and suburban Indiana rely on,” said Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch, Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development. “These grants are a catalyst for growth and will help organizations, like Purdue and Indiana University, find new, innovative ways to cultivate this important sector of our economy.”

Along with enhancing the markets for specialty crops, the grants work to address several key issues impacting the agricultural sector by investing in research, and increasing nutritional knowledge and consumption of specialty crops, to name a few.

“Through research, innovation and collaboration, these projects will help address some of the critical issues impacting specialty crops in Indiana, spurring growth in this sector,” said Melissa Rekeweg, ISDA Interim Director. “This is a really valuable program to help scale up specialty crop production in the state.”

The following list includes the organizations that received funding for the 2018-2020 grant cycle:

**Organization:** Indiana University – School of Public Health: Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Studies

**Award:** \$70,000

**Project:** Indiana University researchers will partner with the Indiana Christmas Tree Growers Association to increase the sales of Indiana grown Christmas trees and address the increasingly competitive marketplace with the development of educational materials and a promotional campaign.

**Organization:** Purdue University – College of Agriculture: Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture

**Award:** \$55,199

**Project:** Purdue University will evaluate commercially-available and locally-produced growing media made from composted organic waste and conventional media components, and identify the media qualities necessary to produce the best vegetable transplants for use in organic vegetable farming.

**Organization:** Indiana State Department of Agriculture – Indiana Grown

**Award:** \$132,610

**Project:** Through the Indiana Grown initiative, ISDA will work to educate Hoosier consumers about the importance of buying specialty crops grown in Indiana, while supporting growers statewide through their work with Nutritional Public Service Announcements and the Produce Marketing

Association show.

**Organization:** Purdue University – College of Agriculture: Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture

**Award:** \$50,000

**Project:** Purdue University will develop research based and Indiana region-specific information for hydroponic lettuce production in greenhouses and transfer crop production and marketing knowledge to Indiana farmers through effective extension education.

**Organization:** Purdue University – College of Agriculture: Department of Forestry and Natural Resources

**Award:** \$55,535

**Project:** Purdue University will work in partnership with the Indiana Hop Growers Association and individual Indiana hop growers to respond to the expansion and interest in growing hops in Indiana.

**Organization:** Purdue University – College of Agriculture: Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture

**Award:** \$35,000

**Project:** Purdue University will develop research-based information for profitable indoor or vertical farming and train beginner farmers and entrepreneurs with best practices through effective extension education.

For more information about the Specialty Crop Block Grant program, contact Ann McCambridge at [AMccambridge@isda.IN.gov](mailto:AMccambridge@isda.IN.gov) or visit [www.isda.in.gov](http://www.isda.in.gov).

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## ABOUT ISDA

The [Indiana State Department of Agriculture \(ISDA\)](#) was established as a separate state agency by the Legislature in 2005. Administratively, ISDA reports to [Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch](#), who also serves as Indiana's Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development. Major responsibilities include advocacy for Indiana agriculture at the local, state and federal level, managing soil conservation programs, promoting economic development and agricultural innovation, serving as a regulatory ombudsman for agricultural businesses, and licensing grain firms throughout the state.



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