

Week One Newsletter

Introduction to West Virginia Specialty Crops

Specialty crops are an important part of West Virginia agriculture and include fruits, vegetables, nuts, and horticultural plants such as nursery crops and flowers. These crops are often grown on smaller farms but provide high value and fresh food for local communities.

According to the USDA Census of Agriculture, about 2,510 farms in West Virginia grow specialty crops on more than 13,000 acres of land. Of those acres, roughly 5,900 acres are orchards, about 2,800 acres are vegetables, and over 800 acres are berries.

Many of these farms are small, family-owned operations, which rely on farmers' markets, roadside stands, and local food programs to sell their products and connect directly with consumers.

Over 2,000

farms in WV grow specialty crops



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Major Specialty Crops in West Virginia

West Virginia produces a wide range of fruit and vegetable specialty crops. Important fruit crops include apples, peaches, blueberries, strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, and grapes.

Apples are the most significant fruit crop, with about 7,000 acres of bearing apple orchards and around 1,200 acres of peaches grown across West Virginia. Much of this production is concentrated in the Eastern Panhandle, where the climate and soils are ideal for tree fruit production.

Vegetable crops such as tomatoes, peppers, green beans, cabbage, kale, pumpkins, and sweet corn are also widely grown. These crops are commonly sold fresh at farmers' markets and through community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs, providing nutritious and locally grown food to communities across the state.



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Unique Crops and the Importance of Buying Local

In addition to fruits and vegetables, West Virginia farmers grow horticultural crops such as Christmas trees, ornamental flowers, nursery shrubs, and vegetable transplants for home gardens. There are also several unique and emerging specialty crops, including maple syrup, honey, hops, wine grapes, and ramps, a wild Appalachian onion that is a regional culinary favorite.

Specialty crops also contribute to the agricultural economy through research, marketing, and education programs. For example, the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program provides more than \$300,000 annually in funding to West Virginia projects that support specialty crop farmers and expand market opportunities.

Buying locally grown specialty crops helps support farmers, strengthen local economies, and provide fresher seasonal food for communities. Farmers' markets and local farm stands are some of the best places to find these products and connect with the people who grow them.

