

# EMPHASIS ON SPECIALTY CROPS

Specialty Crops are defined by the USDA as “Fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture).” *What is not a Specialty Crop?* All commodity crops, such as corn, wheat and cotton; seed crops such as canola or soybean; bio-energy crops like switchgrass and sugar cane; and forages such as hay, alfalfa or clover.

Here on the MCC Student Farm, we focus on diversified organic vegetables, tree fruit, brambles and small fruit, and cut flowers. We showcase crops that can be processed into “value added” products like beverages, jams, and nutritious snacks. These products can contribute significantly to farm viability.



## UNIQUE SPECIALTY CROPS ON THE MCC STUDENT FARM

**HOPS** have been used in beer brewing for over 1,000 years. They are a perennial, herbaceous vine that can grow up to 20 feet in one growing season, as much as eight inches in a day! Cones are harvested in August and typically dried before use. Different varieties have unique flavors including citrus, pine or spice.



**ELDERBERRIES** are native to North America east of the Rocky Mountains and can grow in a variety of soil conditions. They have been used for thousands of years in wine, jelly, dyes and juice. The berries are not good for fresh eating but are high in antioxidants, vitamins and polyphenols and are used in immunity boosting medicine. They are harvested in August.



**ARONIA**, also called chokeberry, are native to North America and were used by the Potawatomi (Neshnabé) in teas and to treat colds. While they are not for fresh eating, aronia berries can be baked into pies, or made into jam and syrup. They contain higher levels of antioxidants, polyphenols, and anthocyanins than most other fruits. Aronia are harvested in late summer when purplish black.



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