



AmericanHort

WORKING FOR HORTICULTURE

ABOUT US

AmericanHort unites the horticultural industry and represents professionals from all facets of the industry.

From growers to retailers, breeders to installers, suppliers to innovators, students to researchers, and everyone in between, people and businesses across the horticulture industry call AmericanHort their inspiration, voice, community, business partner, leader, and advocate.

With farm gate crop value of roughly \$17 billion, total industry economic output of \$348 billion, and directly supporting 2.32 million full- and part-time jobs, the horticulture industry is a key player in the American economy.

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Farm Bill

The five-year Farm Bill is set to expire on October 1, 2025. The Titles Related to Horticulture, Research, Rural Development, Crop Insurance, and trade in the Farm Bill are instrumental in our industry's success. AmericanHort, along with the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance (SCFBA), urges Congress to pass a bipartisan five-year Farm Bill to provide much-needed support to our growers, retailers, suppliers, researchers, partners, and customers.

WHAT WE SEEK

We urge USDA to adopt the Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act of 2024 definition of specialty crops as the standard across all programs to ensure clarity and consistency.

Establish a comprehensive safety net for specialty crop growers in the form of affordable and effective crop insurance:

- Congress should work with USDA to expand crop insurance options for the entire horticulture industry, including nursery, greenhouse, and landscape operations. Many specialty crop growers lack access to affordable and effective coverage. To address this, Congress should create a Specialty Crop Advisory Committee to guide improvements. Reforms are needed to include more flexible policy development, improved data utilization, updates to Whole Farm Revenue Protection, expanded prevented planting coverage, targeted risk research, and enhanced outreach to growers.

Tree Assistance Program (TAP) Improvements:

- Enhance Flexibility: Extend rehabilitation timelines, allow replanting of non-viable but living trees, and permit updates for higher-density plantings to help growers recover and modernize after disasters.

Consistency and predictability for specialty crop growers receiving ad hoc economic assistance from USDA:

- Congress should establish a permanent program, like the MASC program, as a mechanism for delivering direct economic assistance to specialty crop growers.

Agriculture Trade and Food Assistance Program:

- U.S. specialty crop growers face higher labor and compliance costs than many foreign competitors. To stay competitive and support domestic food production, Farm Bill programs should invest in market development, research, and technology. We urge Congress to fund the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) program and support efforts to boost specialty crop export competitiveness.

Invest in research, technology, and innovation:

- Support the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI): Reinstate the Secretary's ability to waive matching fund requirements and prioritize research in areas like automation, pest detection, crop improvement, and post-harvest handling.

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- Dedicate \$40 million annually within SCRI for labor-saving mechanization and automation, with unused funds returning to general SCRI use.
- Provide stable funding for the IR-4 Program to support critical crop protection research for specialty crops.

To support the specialty crop sector, Congress should set aside an increase of at least \$5 million per year in the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) for multi-state projects with broad industry benefits.

- The 2018 Farm Bill permanently authorized \$85 million per year in mandatory funding for the SCBGP.
- Congress should also reaffirm USDA's ability to promote U.S. specialty crops and direct the agency to use programs like SCBGP and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to help growers adopt automation and mechanization tools that lower labor costs but remain expensive and underused.



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Research & Innovation

Nursery and greenhouse crops account for 15% of the total value of U.S. crop agriculture, yet our industry receives less than 1% of USDA research funding. While horticulture does not receive, nor does it seek, government subsidies, public investment remains essential. Strategic support for research, plant pest prevention, and mitigation helps sustain the critical infrastructure our industry relies on to thrive. We strongly support several USDA programs that serve as pillars of this infrastructure.

FLORICULTURE AND NURSERY RESEARCH INITIATIVE

The Floriculture and Nursery Research Initiative (FNRI) is a unique partnership involving USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS), universities, and industry (AmericanHort and SAF). It is often held up as a model for other industries. FNRI is vital to our industry efforts to overcome pest and disease challenges, enhance the efficiency of our production practices, develop and promote sustainable growing practices, and advance the economic, environmental, and human health benefits of our industry's products and services. Over the years, Congress has built the initiative up to over \$5.5M annually. We will seek additional funding of \$2M in FY2026 to keep pace with rising costs and to tackle additional research.

IR-4 PROGRAM

The IR-4 Program was established to facilitate regulatory approval of sustainable pest management technology for specialty crops, including environmental horticulture crops, to promote public health and well-being. Funding for the IR-4 Program remained flat for many years at \$11.9M annually. Coupled with rising research costs and service fees, the IR-4's impact is diminishing. The number of field trials decreased 21% in the Environmental Horticulture Program alone from 2016-2018. We are asking Congress to increase financial support for the IR-4 Project in FY 2026 from \$15M to the Congressionally authorized \$25M.

WE SUPPORT:

- Modernizing agricultural research facilities and increasing funding for high-priority research focused on the horticulture industry.
- Expanding the Specialty Crop Research Initiative
- Increasing funding for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and improving stakeholder consultation processes.
- Strengthening U.S. plant health protections by increasing funding for the Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program under PPA Section 7721.

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Supply Chain: Tariffs, Trade & Transportation

TARIFFS WHAT WE SEEK

The horticulture industry relies on a wide range of agricultural inputs that are not readily produced in the U.S., making access to imported materials critical for continued growth and competitiveness. AmericanHort is focused on preserving this access by advocating for fair and predictable trade policies that minimize cost burdens on growers and ensure supply chain reliability. Reducing or eliminating tariffs on essential inputs helps protect businesses, many of them small and family-owned, from rising production costs and supply disruptions.

In addition to tariff relief, AmericanHort supports a transparent and functional exclusion process at the U.S. Trade Representative's office, particularly when no viable domestic alternatives exist. The organization also advocates for trade policies that reflect the structure of the horticulture industry and promote clear communication between Customs and Border Protection (CBP), USDA APHIS, and importers to avoid unnecessary delays or penalties at ports of entry to facilitate safe and efficient plant trade.

TRANSPORTATION & SUPPLY CHAIN POLICY WHAT WE SEEK

Reliable transportation is essential for delivering perishable horticultural products, inputs, and equipment. The horticultural industry relies on various modes of transportation, including trucking, rail, waterways, and ports, to transport goods.

Congress should support a state opt-in pilot program to modernize federal Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) limits, allowing 91,000 pounds on six axles to improve efficiency and reduce congestion. Addressing the truck driver shortage through better recruitment, retention, and streamlined licensing is also critical. Additionally, increased investment in first- and last-mile infrastructure will help growers access major transport routes and reduce costly delays.

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Workforce & Labor

WHAT WE SEEK

Labor shortages and access to labor continue to pose significant challenges to the horticulture industry, particularly in plant production and landscape installation. Horticulture is one of the few industries that utilize H-2A and H-2B visas.

H-2A

The H-2A visa program is essential but in need of reform to better meet workforce demands. In the 118th Congress, the House Agriculture Committee's bipartisan Agricultural Labor Working Group released targeted policy recommendations to modernize the program, improve access, and enhance stability. Chairman G.T. Thompson is working to translate these recommendations into legislation that would:

- Streamline the H-2A application process through a single electronic portal.
- Allow staggered start dates and expedite processing for returning workers.
- Shift recruitment from print to digital and require USDA consultation on program rules.
- Provide greater wage predictability by capping fluctuations and eliminating mid-contract adjustments.
- Offer flexibility in job duties without triggering higher pay and explore alternative AEWR calculations.
- Expand support for safe, affordable farmworker housing and allow small farm waivers based on financial need.

H-2B

The H-2B visa program is essential for landscape businesses that face chronic shortages of seasonal labor. It enables companies to scale during peak seasons, supporting U.S. jobs across the landscape

and horticulture supply chains. The program's outdated annual cap of 66,000 visas—set over 30 years ago—is far below current demand, with roughly half of all H-2B visas used by the landscape industry, the program's largest user.

The following fixes would provide relief and assistance to the landscape and horticulture industry:

- Raise the annual visa cap to a minimum of 120,000 visas a year.
- Include "may to shall" H-2B discretionary language in the FY26 DHS appropriations bill.
- Create a certified seasonal employer H-2B cap exemption.

We urge members of Congress to support legislation that strengthens the H-2A and H-2B visa programs and ensures a stable, legal workforce for the American horticulture industry.

FURTHER BACKGROUND:

President Trump and his administration can take immediate steps to stabilize the agricultural workforce through executive and administrative actions. These include prioritizing H-2A visa processing, modernizing wage calculations, expanding eligibility for non-seasonal roles, and clarifying the definition of agricultural labor. While these actions are helpful, they are only temporary.

President Trump, his family, and businesses have utilized the H-2A and H-2B programs—just like many growers across the country. But agriculture cannot rely on stopgap measures. We urge the administration to lead in securing a permanent legislative solution that ensures a reliable, legal workforce for U.S. horticulture and agriculture.

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