



THINK Academy Student Wins State Essay Contest

Each year the Wisconsin Farm Bureau's "Ag in the Classroom" program hosts an essay contest revolving around food and agriculture. This contest is open to Wisconsin fourth- and fifth-grade students. This year the students were asked to write a 100-to-300-word essay with the theme, "Tell us about cranberry production in Wisconsin during one of the four seasons."

A total of 2,818 Wisconsin students wrote essays for the competition, which is sponsored by the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Foundation, Insight FS, and We Energies. Rochelle Grossbier, teacher at THINK Academy had one of her students, Max Hetze, win the state contest! The finalist from each of Wisconsin Farm Bureau's nine districts across the state received a certificate, educational resources for their teacher and a presentation about Wisconsin agriculture for their class. Max's class had a special treat when the author of *Time for Cranberries*, Lisl Detlesfsen, came to his classroom to make a classroom presentation. Following is the interesting essay written by Max:

Growing Cranberries in Wisconsin in the Spring

By Max Hetze



Cranberries are small, red, tangy fruits. They can be made into a lot of different things, including sauce, dried cranberries, juice, just eaten fresh and much more. But there is a long process to making cranberries.

In the spring, cranberry harvesters have to remove the winter flood. In April, May, and June, vines come out of dormancy and they can start the growing season. The bog is flooded in mid-May to practice managing insects, weeds and disease.

A cranberry bog might need to be planted again because it's not level, or weeds like briar, poison ivy, or brambles have taken over the cranberry vines. If that happens, big construction equipment needs to move soil and level the bog to prepare to plant new vines. Growers might also square off the beds to make the operations more efficient.

In April, May and June, berries come out of dormancy, letting the buds change to uprights containing fruit, and flowers. Berries have a temperature tolerance, in which the plant can take damage from frost. The temperature tolerance changes when the plant matures every week during a spring growth spurt. Cranberry farms can lose a whole two years' income if cranberries have severe frost damage. Automated irrigation systems allow growers to automatically turn on or off irrigation pumps. Sensors are placed among the vines, to monitor temperature or other weather conditions. They can be fully controlled via the Internet. These systems can save growers 9,000-plus gallons of water per acre on a frost night.

Growing cranberries is a very hard and long process. Cranberry growing isn't just in the spring. It is a process that continues through all of the seasons. It may be long, but it is definitely worth it in the end.