

Important information for harvesting wild American ginseng in the State of Virginia

- No license is required to harvest wild ginseng on private land in Virginia, but permission must be obtained from the landowner or managing authority.
- Anyone in Virginia who purchases ginseng for resale state must obtain a dealer's license from the state Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
- The harvest season for wild ginseng in Virginia is from September 1 to December 31, except that this does not apply to harvest on one's own land. Uncertified green wild ginseng root can be sold from September 1 to January 14, and uncertified dry wild ginseng root can be sold from September 15 to March 31.
- Virginia law requires all harvested wild ginseng to be 5 years of age or older. Virginia law requires harvesters to plant the seeds of harvested ginseng at the harvest site.
- The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Office of Plant & Pest Services, Endangered Species Coordinator, serves as the state's ginseng coordinator, and can be reached at (804) 786-3515 or by addressing correspondence to:
P.O. Box 1163
Richmond, VA 23218
- Ginseng collection is not currently allowed in George Washington and Jefferson National Forests. Permits are not being issued at this time.

The information here is believed to be accurate but does not replace the actual laws that govern the harvest and sale of ginseng. Make sure you know and follow all state laws and regulations where you harvest ginseng.

GOOD STEWARDSHIP CHECKLIST

When harvesting wild American ginseng, make sure you follow all of these good stewardship practices:

- Get permission to harvest.
- Harvest only plants that are at least 5 years old.
- Dig only plants with red fruit.
- Plant seeds under $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 inch of soil.
- Leave some mature plants for the future.

Information Provided By



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GOOD STEWARDSHIP HARVESTING OF

WILD AMERICAN GINSENG

(*Panax quinquefolius*)

American ginseng is a long-lived perennial plant that grows in woodlands throughout the mountain areas of the Eastern United States and Canada. Plants come up in early spring, produce small greenish-yellow flowers and green fruit in mid-summer, which mature to bright red. Plants die back in the fall.

American ginseng roots have been traded continuously in international commerce since the beginning of the 18th Century. The biggest market has always been in Asian countries, which buy more than 30 tons of wild American ginseng every year.

American ginseng has been protected since 1975 under an international treaty known as CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), which requires its export to be regulated by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS). FWS must ensure that exported wild ginseng is harvested in a manner that is both legal and not detrimental to the survival of the species. For specific export requirements see:

<http://www.fws.gov/international/animals/ginindx.html>.

The harvest practices presented in this brochure are provided to encourage people who collect wild American ginseng to act as stewards of the plant and of its habitat. By following these guidelines, you are contributing to and protecting a sustainable future for wild American ginseng, and preserving a longstanding American tradition.

Stewardship Harvesting of Wild American Ginseng

There are a number of harvest practices that must be followed for a collector to be a ginseng steward:

GET PERMISSION TO HARVEST

Whether you are on private or public land, always get permission before digging ginseng. Harvest is not currently allowed in any National Park or national forest in Virginia.

When digging on public land, always obtain required permits and comply with all rules. When digging on private property, get the permission of the landowner or his/her agent. Also, report any signs of property damage, habitat loss, or trespassing to the landowner.

RESPECT AMERICAN GINSENG'S LIFE CYCLE

American ginseng's life cycle, as shown, illustrates the life stages of the plant. Seedlings have only 1 prong (leaf), which usually has 3 leaflets. The next phase has 2 prongs, with 3 or 5 leaflets on each. Mature plants have 3 or 4 prongs, each with 5 leaflets.

Researchers have estimated that each ginseng plant in the wild needs to produce over 30 seeds to replace each plant harvested. Never harvest seedling (1-prong) or juvenile (2-prong) plants, or plants that are less than 5 years old with at least 4 "bud scars" on the "neck" at the top of the root. Roots from younger plants are not allowed to be exported and many ginseng buyers won't buy these small roots, so it's best to leave these plants in the ground for future harvests. Virginia law requires all harvested wild ginseng to be 5 years of age or older.

DIG SOME, LEAVE SOME

Good stewardship requires diggers to leave enough plants so that populations continue to be healthy and plentiful. Always leave some mature plants in every ginseng patch where you dig.

HARVEST ONLY IN THE HARVEST SEASON

The harvest season for wild ginseng varies by state. Make sure you know the legal state harvest season where you dig ginseng, and always comply with the state rules.

Never harvest plants before the fruit is ripe (red). This is a requirement in most states, and is an essential good stewardship practice.

PLANT RIPE FRUIT!!!

Experienced harvesters know to plant ginseng's red berries as they dig the roots. This stewardship practice may explain why ginseng is still in the woods after three centuries of digging.

The best practice is to plant the red berries under $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 inch of soil. Researchers have found that planting the ripe seeds at this depth can produce up to 8 times more seedlings!

PROTECT AMERICAN GINSENG'S HABITAT

Stewards of wild ginseng must care for the plant, as well as its native habitat.

Be aware of land-use and zoning activities in your community and join with local organizations to make your voice heard. Though landowners' property rights should be respected, make sure they are aware of the value of ginseng and other non-timber plants on their land.



Drawing from: WS Persons and JM Davis. *Growing & Marketing Ginseng, Goldenseal & Other Woodland Medicinals*. Bright Mountain Books, 206 Riva Ridge/Fairview NC 28730. ©2005. Used with permission.

OTHER STEWARDSHIP PRACTICES

Every ginseng steward should be aware of a few other practices:

- After you dig some of the mature plants in a ginseng patch, and have planted all of the red ripe seeds, break the stems off of any remaining plants so that others don't take more plants from the same population.
- Think about planting your own woodland ginseng patch with local native seeds so that even more ginseng is produced for the future.