Important information for harvesting wild American ginseng in the State of

Pennsylvania

- No license is required to dig wild ginseng on private land in Pennsylvania.
- A commercial license must be obtained from the state by anyone who intends to export from the state any ginseng harvested in Pennsylvania.
- The state's harvest season for wild ginseng is August 1 to November 30. Possession of harvested fresh ("green") ginseng is prohibited from April 1 and August 1.
- Pennsylvania state law requires that all harvested wild ginseng plants have at least 3 prongs of 5 leaflets each, and that plants are collected only when the fruit is red.
- Pennsylvania requires that seeds of collected wild ginseng be planted in the immediate vicinity of the collection site.
- Ginseng may not be harvested on state-owned lands in Pennsylvania.
- The PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources, Bureau of Forestry, serves as the state's ginseng coordinator. This office can be reached at (717) 787-3444 or:

  6th Floor, Rachel Carson State Office Bldg.
  P.O. Box 8552
  Harrisburg, PA 17105-8552

- A permit is required to collect ginseng in Allegheny National Forest, which can be contacted at (814) 723-5150 or via mail:

  P.O.Box 847
  Warren, PA 16368

For news about American ginseng in PA see:
http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/wildplant/vulnerable_plants.aspx.

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.

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GOOD STEWARDSHIP CHECKLIST

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

- ☐ Get permission to harvest.
- ☐ Harvest only mature (3- and 4-prong) plants that are at least 5 years old.
- ☐ Dig only plants with red fruit.
- ☐ Plant seeds under ¾ to 1 inch of soil.
- ☐ Leave some mature plants for the future.

Information Provided By

AMERICAN HERBAL PRODUCTS ASSOCIATION

(301) 588-1171 ♦ ahpa@ahpa.org

United Plant Savers — Planting the Future

www.unitedplantsavers.org

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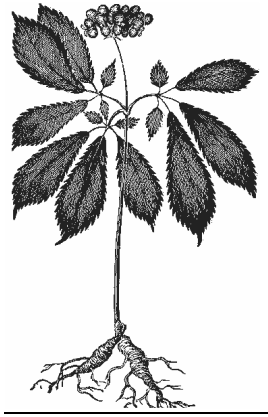


GOOD STEWARDSHIP HARVESTING OF

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.

PENNSYLVANIA

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. Some National Forests and state-owned lands will allow harvest of ginseng but require you to obtain a permit. *Harvest is not allowed in any National Park*.

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.

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!!!

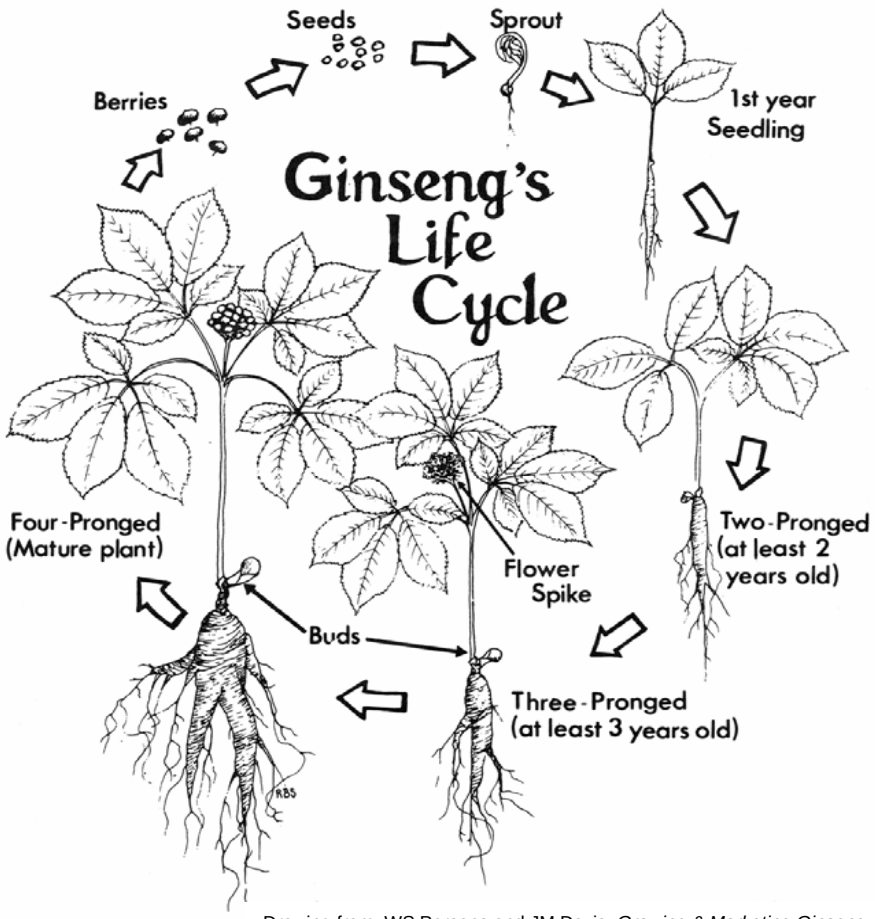
Experienced harvesters know to plant ginseng's red berries as they dig the roots. This stewardship practice may explain why ginseng is still in the woods after three centuries of digging.

The best practice is to *plant the red berries under ¾ 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 plants, 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.