
WILD GINSENG: Regulations and Guidelines for Sustainable Harvest

Wild Ginseng Harvesting

Recognizing that commercial demands may cause overharvesting of ginseng, Wisconsin law regulates the harvest, sale and purchase of wild ginseng in the state. In order to promote the most sustainable harvesting practices, international trade agreements permit U.S. export of wild ginseng only from those states that can annually show that harvest and export are not harming the wild ginseng resource. This brochure covers the main points of Wisconsin wild ginseng regulations (s. 29.611 Wisconsin statutes and Administrative Rules Chapter NR 28) and provides guidelines for harvesting and replanting ginseng to maintain populations.

What is Wild Ginseng?

Wild ginseng (*Panax quinquefolium*) is defined as ginseng that is not grown or nurtured by a person. This includes all wild simulated ginseng, from wild or cultivated seeds, planted in a wild forest habitat and not tended in any way prior to harvest.

The regulations do not apply to cultivated or woods-grown ginseng that has been watered, weeded, fertilized or cared for in some way. They are both regulated by the Department of Agriculture under s.94.50. Registration for growers & certificates of origin for exporters of cultivated and woods-grown ginseng from Wisconsin are available from the Wisconsin Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, 2811 Agriculture Dr. Box 8911, Madison, WI 53708 (608-224-4575)

Who May Harvest Wild Ginseng

Ginseng harvest licenses are required for anyone selling their harvest or digging on land they do not own. Landowners who dig wild ginseng on their own land and do not sell it are exempt from needing a harvester's license. Those digging on their own land

and selling it may obtain a free license. Licenses for digging on others' land, with the owners' permission, cost \$15.75 per harvest season for Wisconsin residents and \$30.75 for non-residents. Tribal members do not need a state harvester's license to harvest ginseng on their own reservation.

Harvesters must have a valid harvester's license in their possession at the time of harvest and sale, and must show the license to conservation wardens upon request and to wild ginseng dealers when selling the ginseng. Harvester's licenses and wild ginseng regulations are available from:

The License Section, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 101 Webster St., P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707 (608-266-2621) and at most DNR field stations and service centers.

When and Where to Harvest

The wild ginseng harvest season is September 1 through November 1. Ginseng may not be legally dug, nor green roots sold, outside of this period. This season is set to maximize the chances that seed will be ripe when harvested statewide. Early harvest may also result in lower quality dried roots. Wild ginseng legally harvested within the harvest season may be sold to licensed dealers from September 1 to March 31.

If you want to dig ginseng on land you do not own, be sure to obtain permission from the owner. Persons hunting ginseng on private land without permission are violating trespassing laws, which can result in their arrest and prosecution. It is no longer necessary for landowners to post their land to prevent trespassing.

It is prohibited to harvest wild ginseng on any lands owned or administered by the State of Wisconsin. The National Forests, National Parks, National

Wildlife Refuges and Federal Waterfowl Production Areas are also closed to ginseng harvest. Rules for collecting on county or municipal lands will vary. Check with the managers of these areas. Ginseng may only be harvested on Indian Reservations by tribal members under that tribe's conservation rules.

How to Harvest Wild Ginseng

Before digging wild ginseng, look over the area to see how much is present. Leave all young plants and several of the mature plants, as they are needed to produce seeds for future years. Harvest only mature plants with at least three, preferably more, 'prongs' or leaves (each usually having 5 leaflets) and a flowering/fruitle stalk. It is recommended that only four-prong individuals be harvested in order to protect the ginseng population from overharvesting. It is prohibited to dig plants with only two leaves, or plants that have not produced a flowering/fruitle stalk. Their roots are generally smaller and of lesser value. It usually takes six to ten years for a wild ginseng plant to produce marketable roots and seeds. Federal regulations prohibit exporting roots under five years old. Most dealers will refuse to buy young roots.

The age of a plant may be determined by counting the stem scars on the 'neck' of the root. Plants under ten years or with roots smaller than your thumb can be replanted nearby. Such roots may double in size in only a few years. When harvesting you must keep the stems with the roots until you return home to provide proof of at least three leaves and a fruiting stalk. (Note -it is not necessary that the stems stay attached to the roots.) Seeds must be planted in the area of the parent plant. Squeeze the seeds from the red berries and plant at least 12 inches from where the plant was harvested, six inches apart and 1 1/2 inches deep in loosely mulched soil. Cover with leaf litter.

Wild Ginseng Dealers

Any person who buys at least 8 ounces of wild ginseng in Wisconsin for the purpose of resale is considered a dealer and is required to have a Wisconsin Dealer's License. Paid employees or family members of a licensed dealer who are working at the primary place of business for that dealer will be covered by the licensed dealer.

All dealer's licenses are valid July 1 to June 30. Three classes of resident dealer's licenses allow dealers to choose the license that best fits their needs:

Class A (\$100)—for transactions up to 100 pounds
Class B (\$500)—for transactions up to 1000 pounds
Class C (\$1000)—for unlimited amounts of transactions

Non-residents may purchase a non-resident dealer's license (\$1000) for unlimited amounts of transactions.

Dealer's licenses are available from the DNR Licensing Section, 101 S. Webster St., P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707 (608-266-2621).

Dealers may purchase Wisconsin wild ginseng only from licensed harvesters or licensed dealers and should record the seller's name, address and license number on purchase receipts issued by the Department of Natural Resources. Records must be kept of each transaction (purchase and sales) by the dealers who report them annually on forms provided by the Department. State certification by the DNR is required for all of the wild ginseng leaving the state. Dealers are responsible for arranging for certification with DNR staff. Dealers are also responsible for ensuring that all roots sold for export as wild ginseng are indeed wild, are five years or older and were legally harvested. Shipments with underage or cultivated roots will be refused at the port of export and returned to the dealer for removal of roots that cannot be legally exported.



For more information contact:

Endangered Resources Program
Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 7921
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7921
608-267-5066



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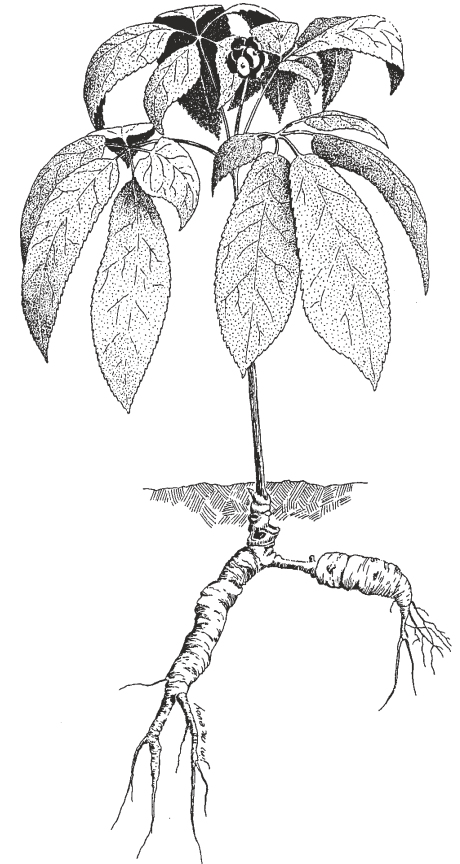
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Practice selective, sustainable harvesting by leaving many intact plants behind, and planting the seeds of the plants you do remove. This will help insure that there will be valuable wild ginseng to harvest in the years ahead.