

Wild Ginseng

its conservation in Indiana

Ginseng information

- 1:** It is **ILLEGAL** to harvest wild ginseng out of season. (Class A misdemeanor)
- 2:** To harvest **LEGALLY**, a ginseng plant must have: at least 3 prongs and a flowering or fruiting stalk, or at least 4 internodes on the rhizome. (Harvesting plants not meeting these criteria is a Class B infraction.)
- 3:** It is **REQUIRED** that mature fruits and any seeds on the harvested ginseng be planted in the vicinity of where the plant was dug and in a manner that encourages germination.
- 4:** It is **REQUIRED** that the entire stalk and leaves be retained with the plant until it is taken to the harvester's residence or place of business, unless the root has at least 4 internodes on the rhizome.
- 5:** It is **ILLEGAL** to sell or remove mature fruits and seeds from the vicinity of where the ginseng was taken.
- 6:** It is **ILLEGAL** to buy, sell, or possess any ginseng out of season without written authorization from the DNR Division of Law Enforcement. (A Class B misdemeanor)
- 7:** It is **ILLEGAL** to buy uncertified ginseng for resale without an Indiana Ginseng Dealer's License. (A Class B misdemeanor)
- 8:** **ONLY** certified ginseng can be sold to a buyer in another state. (Exporting uncertified ginseng is a Class A misdemeanor.)
- 9:** **HARVEST** ginseng only where it is permitted—digging on State property is not allowed; digging on private property without permission is theft; digging on other properties may require a permit.
- 10:** Anyone violating these rules will be prosecuted.



Harvest Season

(SEPT. 1 TO DEC. 31 OF EACH YEAR): Harvesters can legally dig wild ginseng. Harvesters do not need a license to dig ginseng nor sell ginseng to a licensed dealer.

Selling Season

(SEPT. 1 OF CURRENT YEAR THROUGH MARCH 31 OF THE NEXT YEAR): Dealers can legally purchase ginseng from harvesters.

When reselling ginseng purchased directly from harvesters, the dealer must complete a form certifying the ginseng's origin and weight. A copy of the certification must accompany the ginseng when it is shipped.

Purpose of the ginseng law

The purpose of Indiana's ginseng program (Public Law 107 (IC 14-4-8) and Ginseng Rule (312 IAC 19) is to ensure a healthy population for the future. The **HARVEST SEASON** was instituted to encourage replanting of the seeds when they are ripe and ensure that only mature plants are taken. Registration of dealers and certification of ginseng is required in order to monitor the health of the population. The **SELLING SEASON** was established for this purpose. Ginseng that is bought for resale must be certified by an Indiana Conservation Officer. Monitoring reports from dealers assists the DNR in determining if ginseng is declining and needs further protection.



Life History

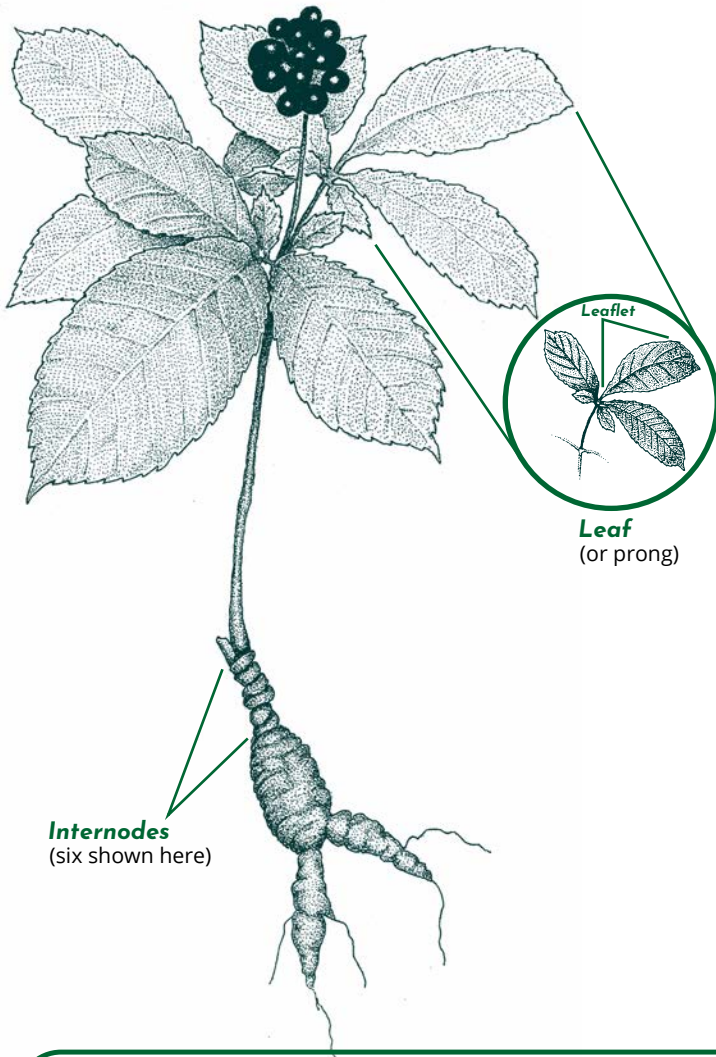


Ginseng grows throughout Indiana. Small groups or solitary plants can be found in shady hardwood forests on moist, rich, well-drained soil. Generally, there is not much competing ground cover.

From the central stem comes 1 or more leaf stalks. The 3-5 toothed "leaves" at the base of each stalk are actually leaflets. These leaflets and their stalk make up 1 leaf (or prong).

First-year plants are only about 2 inches tall and have 1 leaf (prong) with 3 leaflets. Second- and third-year plants have 2 prongs with 5 leaflets each. Plants 4 years old and older are 12-14 inches tall and have 3 prongs with 5 leaflets. The 2 leaflets at the prong base are smaller than the other 3. Plants older than 4 years old may have 3-5 prongs, each with 5 leaflets.

Scattering seeds just under leaf litter but on top of the soil will greatly increase chances of new plants replacing those harvested. This is required by rule 312 IAC 19-1-8 to aid in ginseng reproduction.



A large taproot, often with smaller tails forking off the main root, develops over several years. It is this taproot that has reported medicinal and economic value.

There is no need to carry a large shovel or dig a large hole. Doing so is more work and disturbs surrounding plants. Digging a smaller hole with a digging stick or trowel is sufficient.

Ginseng cannot reproduce until it is 3 or 4 years old. At that time it bears a round cluster of pale green flowers. These flowers produce a fruit-cluster that turns bright red when ripe, about the middle of August.

Contact a dealer for further advice on digging and drying ginseng. The easiest way to find a dealer is to check DNR's ginseng website at on.IN.gov/ginseng

In order to maintain a healthy ginseng crop, it is illegal to dig the taproot until a plant has 3 or 4 prongs. Harvesting younger plants prevents them from producing seed to reproduce themselves.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions on Ginseng



DEALER LICENSE YEAR – September 1 of current year through August 31 of next year.



HARVEST SEASON – September 1 through December 31 of each year.



SELLING SEASON – September 1 of current year through March 31 of the next year.



HARVESTING – Is not allowed on any State property. Is not allowed on private property without owner's permission.



PLANT REQUIREMENTS – At least 3 prongs and a flowering or fruiting stalk; or at least 4 internodes on the rhizome. Seeds must be planted at the harvesting site. Fruits and seeds cannot be sold or removed from the harvested area.



GINSENG POSSESSION – A dealer cannot be in possession of ginseng after March 31 unless the ginseng is certified. A harvester cannot be in possession of ginseng after December 31 without written authorization of the Indiana DNR.



ANNUAL SUMMARY REPORT – due no later than April 30 (which is 30 days after the last day of the selling season, March 31).

Urgent Notice:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) limits the export of wild ginseng to roots that are 5 years of age or older.

Indiana's ginseng law requires ginseng roots have at least 4 internodes (leaf scars). The USFWS will require at least 5 internodes on each root.

Federal inspectors at the points of export will be inspecting barrels, and not allowing shipment of immature roots.

This is to help ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of this important natural resource.

