



ISU FORESTRY EXTENSION

American Ginseng in Iowa: Regulations

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Iowa Regulations: American ginseng, *Panax quinquefolius*, is a species internationally protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). In order to export any portion of a ginseng plant from any state the plant must be harvested in accordance with a state certification program approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A general summary of the Iowa regulations is included in the following section. The complete list of Iowa regulations can be found in Section 571, Chapter 78 of the Iowa Code. These regulations apply to all persons harvesting, cultivating and dealing in American ginseng within the state of Iowa.

“Ginseng” is defined as all parts of a wild or cultivated American Ginseng plant including the roots, rhizomes, leaves and seeds which have not been processed. In the state of Iowa, a distinction is made between cultivated and wild forms of ginseng. “Cultivated ginseng” is considered to be ginseng that is artificially propagated under controlled conditions from a seed or rootlet derived from cultivated parental stock. Controlled conditions may include but are not limited to tillage, fertilization, artificial shade, irrigation, weed and pest control, or nursery operations. “Wild ginseng” is considered to be living or harvested ginseng grown in native habitat which has not been nurtured by a person beyond planting seed or transplants and can include naturally reproducing populations.

Permits: Three separate permits are needed for cultivating, harvesting, and dealing ginseng in the state of Iowa. These permits and necessary applications are available from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and can be purchased through the Electronic License Sales of Iowa (ELSI) system used for regular hunting and fishing licenses. A permit valid for growing, harvesting, selling or buying ginseng must be produced to law enforcement upon request.



Ginseng in autumn color with the minimum three “prongs” required for legal harvest.

A “**grower’s permit**” is required for a person to legally grow cultivated ginseng for the purpose of selling the ginseng. An application for a grower’s permit has to be made by the person seeking the permit and is valid for five years. There is no fee for the permit, except for the charges associated with the online licensing system ELSI. An application for renewal must be filed within 60 days of expiration of the existing grower’s permit.

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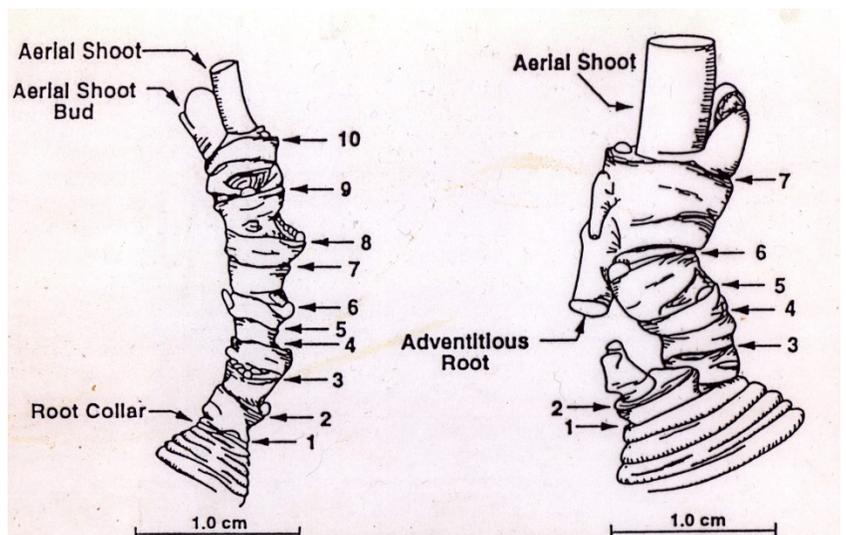
A bag of dried wild ginseng roots ready for sale. Photo by B. Beyfuss

A **“harvester’s permit”** is annually required for any person who harvests wild ginseng for personal use or with the intention of selling the ginseng. A permit may be purchased through the ELSI system, and must be signed by the permit holder. A single fee of \$35 for Iowa residents and \$65 for nonresidents is accessed at the time of purchase. The harvester’s permit allows the permit holder to sell wild ginseng from September 1 through March 15 of the following year. A harvester who sells ginseng to any person other than a lawfully licensed purchaser is also required to hold a valid dealer’s permit. Wild ginseng must be harvested during the legal season from September 1 to October 31 and you must carry and show your valid permit if asked by law enforcement. A valid permit holder may also retain up to four ounces of dry wild ginseng for personal consumption for one year beyond the expiration date of the permit and may not lawfully sell that amount.

A **“dealer’s permit”** is issued to any person who purchases or otherwise transacts for wild or cultivated ginseng with the purpose of latter selling. Paid

employees and family members who work for a dealer at their primary place of business as identified on the permit, may legally operate under the dealer’s permit. The application form for a dealer’s permit must be completed and submitted by the person seeking the dealer’s permit. Processing this application form may take the DNR in excess of 60 days and purchasing a dealer’s permit through the ELSI system requires an additional charge. A valid dealer’s permit must be shown upon request to the DNR when they are certifying ginseng or to a customer when purchasing their ginseng. A duplicate grower’s permit, harvester’s permit or dealer’s permit may be issued upon application to the DNR and the payment of a \$5 fee, plus any charge assessed to use ELSI for issuing the duplicate permit. The state of Iowa holds reciprocity with other states that regulate American ginseng, and will only issue permits to nonresident harvesters, growers and dealers from other states that lawfully allow Iowa residents to operate as such. There are two classes of dealer’s permits available. The Class A dealer’s permit authorizes a person to deal in any amount of ginseng for one license year at a cost of \$250 for Iowa residents and \$500 for nonresidents. The Class B dealer’s permit authorizes an Iowa resident to deal in no more than five pounds dry weight of wild ginseng for one license year at a cost of \$50. A dealer’s permit is valid for one license year, from April 1 until March 31 of the following year.

Harvesting: Regulations of harvesting ginseng in Iowa are complex to interpret, but are summarized as follows. Valid harvester’s permit holders are allowed to harvest wild or cultivated ginseng, while valid grower’s permit holders are only allowed to harvest cultivated ginseng. Harvesting of all ginseng in the state of Iowa is restricted to the permitted harvest season from September 1st to October 31st. Valid harvester’s and grower’s permit holders may sell ginseng from September 1 to March 15 of the following spring. Afterwards, only a person with a valid dealer’s permit may sell ginseng from March 16 through August 31.



Numbers on the right indicate the annual growth scars of the rhizome used to age ginseng plants. Graphic by B. Beyfuss.

Only wild ginseng plants with three or more true leaves or prongs and a flowering or fruiting stalk with red berries may be harvested. Furthermore, it is illegal to harvest or possess a wild ginseng root unless the root has at least five growth scars on its rhizome. If a wild plant with the required number of leaves or prongs is removed from the soil, but has less than five stem scars, the plant must be returned to the soil where it was removed. The entire plant, except the fruit and seeds, of wild ginseng must be kept together after harvesting, until the plant is taken to the harvester's residence or place of business. The seeds from harvested wild ginseng are required to be planted by pushing the seeds into the soil, with a finger, to a depth of no more than one inch, and may not be moved any farther than 100 feet from the parent plant. Seeds from wild ginseng plants originating in Iowa may not be sold, bought or otherwise transacted. Currently, there are no age, size or seeding restrictions on the harvesting of cultivated ginseng. In an effort to conserve and protect native stands of wild ginseng on state-owned or state-managed lands under the jurisdiction of the DNR, those populations may not be disturbed. No person, at any time, is lawfully allowed to possess, harvest, dig, cut, uproot, gather, plant, propagate, intentionally disturb or destroy ginseng or ginseng seed on DNR lands.

Certificates of Origin: All ginseng harvested in Iowa and exported to a location outside the state of Iowa by a grower, harvester or dealer must be accompanied by a certificate of origin available from the Iowa DNR. Certificates of origin are only issued to valid permit holders who have completed an application form for the ginseng being exported. Wild ginseng must be weighed and certified as meeting requirements regarding plant age before receiving a certificate of origin. Certificates are free to valid grower's and dealer's permit holders, but are issued at a cost of \$5 each to valid harvester permit holder.

Wild ginseng may only be transported into the state of Iowa from another state or foreign country for the purpose of dealing, if it is accompanied by a valid certificate of origin from the original state or country. Original certificates of origin must remain with the wild ginseng at all times or possession of that ginseng is illegal in Iowa. Wild ginseng that originates in another state or foreign country may only be exported by an Iowa dealer to a foreign country if it is accompanied by an original valid certificate of origin. Dealers must also maintain a copy of the certificate of origin with the record of transaction. Ginseng received by a dealer from an out of state sender without a valid certificate of origin, must be returned to the sender within 30 days of receipt.

Certificate Number: _____
 Shipment Number: _____
 Year of Harvest: _____

2012 Iowa Ginseng Shipping Certificate

Dealer's Permit Number:	Grower's Permit Number:	Harvester's Permit Number:

Weight of American ginseng harvested in Iowa included in this shipment in numerical and written form:

Dry Ginseng Actual Weight Only	Numerical		Written	
	Pounds	Ounces	Pounds	Ounces
Wild				
Cultivated				

Wet Ginseng Actual Weight Only	Numerical		Written	
	Pounds	Ounces	Pounds	Ounces
Wild				
Cultivated				

REQUIRED: Converted Weight of Wet Root (IAC 571—78.7(1)d)
 Wild Wet Ginseng Weight x .303 = _____ lbs. Dry Weight
 Cultivated Wet Ginseng Weight x .303 = _____ lbs. Dry Weight

Signature of Dealer, Grower, or Harvester: _____
 Printed Name of Dealer, Grower, or Harvester: _____
 Street Address: _____
 City, State, Zip Code: _____

Date of Shipment: _____
 Name of Recipient of Shipment: **REQUIRED** _____
 Street Address of Shipment: _____
 City, State, Zip Code: _____

Iowa Department of Natural Resources Representative
 Certificate of Weight of Ginseng

The original certificate must accompany the ginseng for export from Iowa and until it is exported from the United States, one copy shall be sent to the DNR office in Des Moines, and one copy shall be retained by the dealer, grower, or harvester shipping the ginseng.

Send DNR Copy to: Iowa Department of Natural Resources
 Attn: Mimi Habibab
 502 E. 9th Street
 Des Moines, IA 50319-0034

Purchase Record Numbers included in this shipment	

1) Original/White - Shipper 2) Yellow - DNR 3) Pink - Shipper

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To find a list of dealers for selling ginseng roots and buying seed or to see the complete ISU Forestry Extension publication series on ginseng, visit our website at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/forestry/>.