



West Virginia Division of Forestry
www.wvforestry.com
Earl Ray Tomblin, Governor
Randy Dye, Director/State Forester

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Rooting Around for Cash? Ginseng Digging Season Starts Sept. 1

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – If you're out in the woods and see ginseng that is ripe, remember that you are not allowed to dig it up until Sept. 1. That is the official start of the ginseng digging season in West Virginia.

"Ginseng is an important forest plant," State Forester Randy Dye said. "Asian cultures have believed in ginseng's health benefits for centuries, making the growing and digging of it economically important to the state's economy and the harvesters' wallets."

Demand drives the price of ginseng, which can fluctuate during the digging season. According to Robin Black, who oversees the ginseng program for the DOF, the average price per pound for wild ginseng in 2010 was \$445.

"In the past 20 years, I have seen ginseng as high as \$700 a pound and as low as \$200 a pound. On average, it takes about 300 roots to make a pound of ginseng," Black said. "The more demand from exporters, the higher the price goes. Less demand from exporters means less money per pound."

Besides growing naturally in the woods, ginseng also is cultivated, but roots from cultivated plants typically are worth less per pound than those that grow wild.

Ginseng plants are ready to harvest when their berries turn red. The plant is dug out of the ground and its roots removed. West Virginia state law requires anyone digging ginseng to replant the berries/seeds from the parent plant in the spot where it was harvested; this helps continue the species. Federal regulations set the minimum age a plant can be harvested at five years. The age of the plant is determined by the number of prongs; only plants with three or more prongs are considered old enough to harvest.

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Regional Offices
Farmington 304.825.6983
Beckley 304.256.6775
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The following laws also apply to the harvesting of ginseng:

- Anyone digging ginseng on someone else's property must carry written permission from the landowner allowing him or her to harvest ginseng on the property.
- No permit is needed to dig wild ginseng.
- Digging ginseng on public lands, including state forests, wildlife management areas or state parks, is prohibited.
- Diggers have until March 31 of each year to sell to a registered West Virginia ginseng dealer or have roots weight-receipted at one of the Division of Forestry weigh stations.
- Possession of ginseng roots is prohibited from April 1 through Aug. 31 without a weight-receipt from the Division of Forestry.
 - The ginseng digging season runs through Nov. 30.

For more information about ginseng, contact Robin Black at 304.558.2788.

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