

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

New Rules for Ginseng Permits

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

Citing concerns over declines in wild ginseng, the supervisor of the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests is limiting ginseng harvest in those areas. A permit is required to harvest wild ginseng on National Forests, and it must be collected during a designated harvest season.

Some of this year's changes include:

- The number of annual permits issued will be reduced to 136 permits, a 75 percent reduction from recent years.
- The permitted harvest season will be reduced from four weeks to two weeks. Harvesting will be allowed Sept. 1-15 starting in 2013.
- Each district ranger may further limit ginseng harvests to certain areas of the national forest to allow the plants to regenerate.
- Additionally, harvest is prohibited in designated wilderness and other natural areas set aside for research purposes, such as Walker Cove and Black Mountain.

The Forest Service also plans to increase law enforcement efforts to reduce poaching. Removing a wild ginseng plant or its parts from National Forests without a permit or outside of the legal harvest season is considered theft of public property. Penalties may include a fine up to \$5,000 or six-month sentence in federal prison, or both.

Ginseng root has been favored as a tonic primarily in East Asia for the past two-and-a-half centuries. In North Carolina, ginseng is more common in the mountains, very infrequent in the piedmont, and very rare in the coastal plain.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peebles.