



National Forests in North Carolina

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Suspension of ginseng harvest permits will continue Wild ginseng levels are too low for sustainable harvest

ASHEVILLE, NC (April 25, 2022) – The Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests will not issue American ginseng harvest permits until further notice due to low population levels observed through monitoring and surveys.

After 250 years of commercial harvest, wild ginseng levels are too low to be sustainably harvested. It may take several years to increase local populations.

“Ginseng harvest has been part of Appalachian culture for generations, and we want to see that continue into the next generation. Suspending ginseng harvest helps ensure wild ginseng on our national forests can rebuild its population. If we keep harvesting, the danger is that they’ll completely disappear from this area,” said Gary Kauffman, botanist for the National Forests in North Carolina.

Ginseng is a long-lived perennial plant native to forests of the Eastern U.S. They have a 60-80 year life span and reproduce through seeds. Plants 10 years and older produce the most seeds, but older plants are increasingly rare due to harvesting.

Kauffman has worked with other organizations to reintroduce ginseng into the national forests where the plant has been overharvested using seeds from local production beds. Monitoring will continue looking at population levels, plant sizes, and seed production.

Anyone removing wild ginseng plants or its parts on national forest lands without a permit may be fined up to \$5,000 or a 6-month sentence in federal prison, or both.

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