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The Endangered Chinese Ginseng Species

By Jin Huang

Wild ginseng of Asian origin is being "killed by its own success". After centuries of digging, the plant is becoming virtually impossible to find in its wild state in Asia. Ginseng is the dried root of one of several species of the Araliaceae family of herbs. The most commonly used type is Asian ginseng (*Panax ginseng* C.A., Meyer), often sold as Panax, Chinese, or Korean ginseng.

But the same pressures that led to the near disappearance of ginseng in Asia are being felt now on this continent, as well. Ginseng has become quite an expensive commodity and, with its higher value, there is evidence of increased ginseng poaching and over harvesting by unscrupulous individuals in many locations. This lack of good ginseng harvesting practices, combined with rapid development and clear-cutting of the forest canopy, has begun turning wild North American ginseng, *Panax Quinquefolium*, into a threatened, and possibly an endangered, species.

In 1975, American ginseng was listed in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) agreement. CITES is an international agreement designed to prevent plants and animals with economic value from being wiped out, and ginseng's listing indicates that the species is in some jeopardy due to factors related to international trade. As a result, the agency stopped the international sale of wild and wild-simulated ginseng plants under five years old, including VWG. Five years is the age at which ginseng plants can begin to produce seeds for future plants.

Unless we do something, the history of ginseng depletion in Asia will repeat itself in America and we will lose one of our most important economic crops. And, fortunately, the unique forests we have in the Appalachians provide excellent growing areas for ginseng.

For example, Kentucky mountain-grown ginseng is worth about \$250 to \$300 a pound, according to those following the market. This is due to the climate, the lay of the land, the type of soil, and the mixed hardwood tree cover. The best grades of wild or virtually wild ginseng need good tree cover (maple, poplar, hickories, or similar species) and will provide a sustainable yield year after year.

Ginseng is widely used in the United States to improve overall energy and vitality, particularly during times of fatigue or stress.

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Chinese herbs and Chinese medicines have been used for thousands of years to help people feel better, more vital and live longer. Find out How Ginseng Can Benefit You at

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5000 Years Of Chinese Ginseng

By Jin Huang

Chinese herbs and Chinese medicines have been used for thousands of years to help people feel better, more vital and live longer. Many of them have also been used for treating various illness and restoring the normal body functions for hundreds of years, and have proved their effectiveness. One of the most appealing qualities of Chinese herbs therapy is the low risk of adverse reaction or side effects, especially when compared to pharmaceutical drugs.

Ginseng has been a major medicinal herb in Asia for over 5,000 years, and demand for it is likely to remain strong, as long as growers continue to produce high quality roots. Ginseng is the same herb that traditional ginseng hunters have harvested from the wild for generations in Appalachia. Although slight fluctuations in the export market can occur, as with any product, high quality wild ginseng has been selling for hundreds of dollars per pound in recent years, and experts expect it to sell for a high price for years to come.

Connections to the Past, 'Sang hunters have gathered wild ginseng roots and carefully dried them for centuries in the Appalachians. In some areas, it was probably ginseng – not traditional agricultural crops like corn or tobacco that were the first plants to be traded by early pioneers.

Ginseng is the dried root of one of several species of the Araliaceae family of herbs. The most commonly used type is Asian ginseng (*Panax ginseng* C.A., Meyer), often sold as Panax, Chinese, or Korean ginseng.

Ginseng was gathered directly from the wild like furs and other backwoods commodities. Over the years, ginseng harvest increased and ginseng became known as a reliable source of cash when cash was not otherwise available in some mountain locales. None of this could have happened without the lucrative Asian market for ginseng, which drives the American market. Yet few people are aware of the reasons why ginseng is so highly prized in Asia.

The focus of attention is on two different species of ginseng, one in Asia (mostly in China and Korea), called Panax Ginseng, and its North American counterpart, called Panax Quinquefolium or American Ginseng. In the wild, the two species closely resemble one another, having glistening red berries, peculiar five pointed leaflets, and gnarled roots that are often shaped like a tiny person.

The only major difference between the Asian and American species is a slightly different chemical composition, which is said to give American ginseng a slightly more soothing effect than Asian ginseng. Both species of ginseng are said to produce an overall stimulating effect when consumed, however and both are said to contain "adaptogens," believed to help the body develop all-around

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resistance to stress and disease. Both species are found in deep forests and are difficult to locate.

The wild roots of both bring immensely high prices, especially in the Chinese marketplace.

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