

## Forest Farming Quick Guide

### American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*)

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American ginseng is a highly valued medicinal plant species that has been harvested from the forests of eastern North America for over 300 years. Efforts to bring the plant under commercial cultivation began in the late 1800s and continue today. Overharvesting and habitat loss have resulted in the decline of wild populations and consequently have increased the need and demand for wild-simulated roots that are intentionally grown on private forestlands. This production strategy confers both ecological and economic benefits by helping to reduce harvest pressure on wild populations, while creating economic opportunities for forest farmers.

#### Site Selection:

- North and east facing hillsides with gentle to moderate slopes.
- Rich, moist, well-drained soils that are high in organic matter, with a pH between 5.5 and 6.5.
- 75 to 90 percent shade provided by a mature forest canopy composed of sugar maple, tulip poplar, basswood, beech, buckeye, and other deciduous species.
- Rich understory flora with companion herbs such as trillium, jack-in-the-pulpit, bloodroot, trout lily, goldenseal, bellwort, Solomon's seal, rattlesnake fern, black cohosh, and of course wild American ginseng.

#### Site Preparation and Maintenance:

- Remove large sticks and debris that will interfere with the planting process.
- Selectively prune or remove competitive or suppressive understory trees and shrubs to improve air flow and optimize light conditions.
- Manually remove non-native invasive species from the site.
- Regularly inspect plantings for signs of disease, mortality, animal browse, poaching, etc.
- Repeat pruning and weeding as needed to maintain satisfactory growing conditions.

#### Planting:

- Plant stratified seeds in the fall, just before peak leaf drop.
- Working horizontally across the planting site, rake leaf litter downhill to expose a strip of topsoil 4-5 feet wide and up to 50 feet long.
- Scuff the soil with a hard steel rake, loosening the top ¼ inch.
- Broadcast 5-7 seeds/square foot, covering the planting area evenly.
- Move uphill from the planted area, rake the leaves off another 4-5 feet wide strip, raking them downhill to re-cover the previously seeded area.

#### Propagation:

- Collect ripe seeds mid-August through September and sow ½ inch deep, allowing them to stratify naturally.
- Seeds will germinate the second year after planting.
- Plants can also be propagated by replanting the root rhizome/neck when a viable bud and adventitious root are present.
- Plant rhizomes at a 30° angle, approximately 2 inches deep.

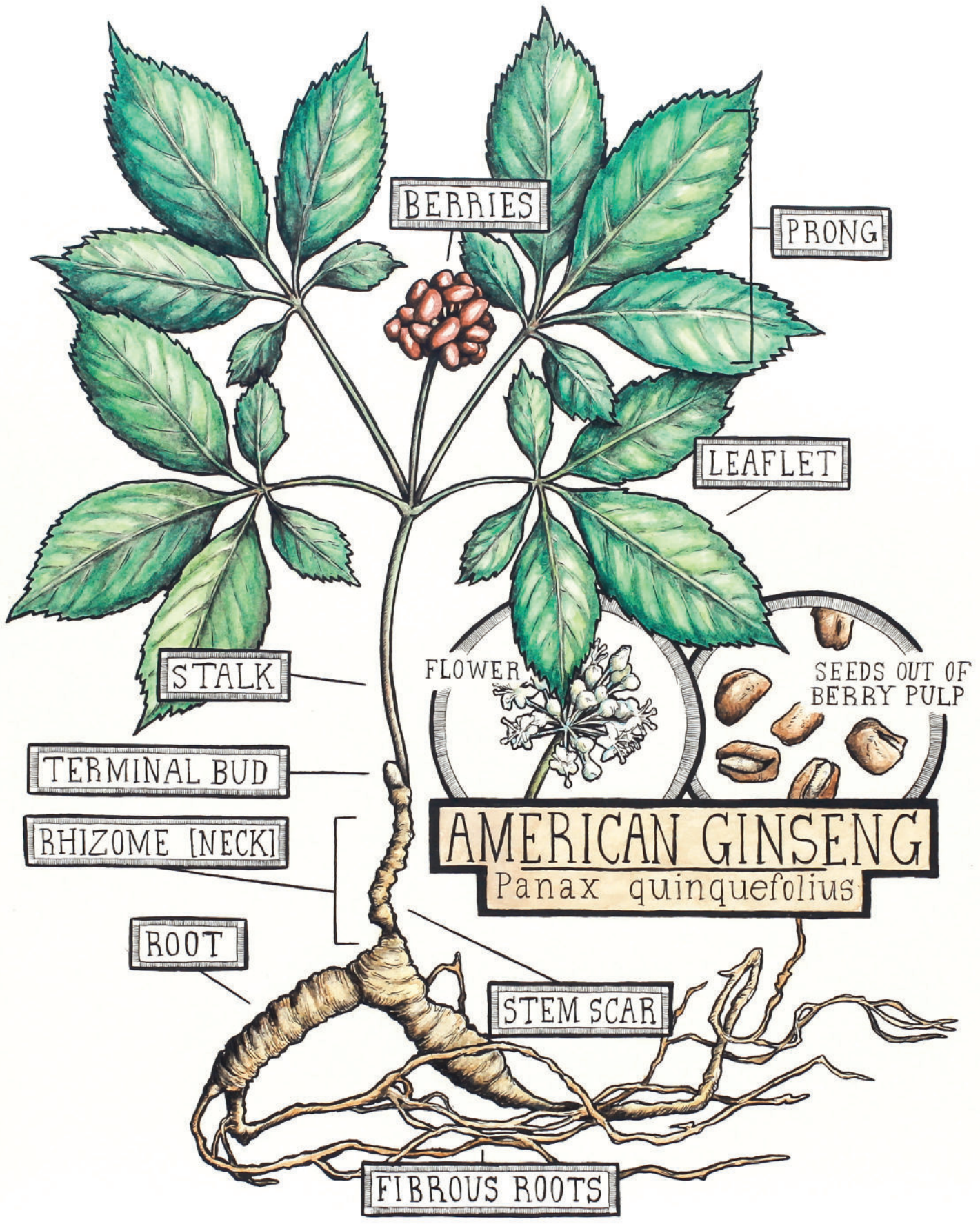


APPALACHIAN BEGINNING  
FOREST FARMER COALITION



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service



BERRIES

PRONG

LEAFLET

STALK

FLOWER

SEEDS OUT OF BERRY PULP

TERMINAL BUD

RHIZOME [NECK]

AMERICAN GINSENG  
*Panax quinquefolius*

ROOT

STEM SCAR

FIBROUS ROOTS