

“The people that actually know the value of ginseng have a great respect for it... Those that don’t are in the dark.”

—Harold Smith, East Tennessee farm manager



PHILANTHROPY AND SUPPORT

The Smithsonian Institution—the world’s largest museum, education, and research complex—shares a strong commitment to inclusivity and catalyzing conversations by reaching audiences across the nation and the globe. Our programs are innovative and help people better understand their place in the world, using technologies to engage learners from all walks of life. We are changing the way that people experience programs and museums.

Founded in 1967, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival is dedicated to promoting the understanding and sustainability of living cultures. At the Festival, musicians, dancers, instrument makers, artisans, and other cultural practitioners engage visitors through daily workshops, master classes, discussion sessions, and performances. The public—both on site and across digital platforms—is encouraged to participate in activities and share stories about the ways in which local living culture connects them to each other and to the larger world.

OUR CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

The Folklife Festival receives approximately 30% of its infrastructure costs from the federal government. Every year the remaining 70%—as well as all of its program-related expenses—must be raised from outside sources. Your generous support enables us to continue promoting culture of, by, and for the people!



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JUNE 25–28 and JULY 1–5, 2020
(June 24– Community Preview)

SMITHSONIAN
FOLKLIFE
FESTIVAL

AMERICAN GINSENG

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE, GLOBAL ROOTS



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

In 1784, the clipper ship *Empress of China* set sail for Canton loaded with over thirty tons of American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*). Thus began the trade of this valuable medicinal plant, which grows wild in the deciduous forests of the Appalachian Mountains, linking two nations half a world apart. Since then, the culture of ginseng has expanded beyond gathering, or “hunting” it in the wild, to cultivating it on family farms in the Midwest and in forest lands.

Today, American ginseng faces many threats, from encroaching suburban sprawl and extraction industries to the environmental impact of global warming. Conservation efforts—protection by government agencies, education on good stewardship, cultivation in forest settings, and research into accelerating its propagation—help ensure American ginseng for future generations.

At the 2020 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, *American Ginseng* will bring together participants with intimate knowledge of gathering, growing, trading, medicinal use, and conservation of this fascinating plant.

Through demonstrations, discussions, and hands-on activities, visitors will learn directly from those with years of traditional knowledge about the many wonders of American ginseng, the “green gold” of the plant world.

Cover: Illustration of ginseng plant with root by Jacob Bigelow, *American Medical Botany*. Boston: Cummings and Hilliard, 1817.

Back photo: Anna Plattner and Justin Wexler show off a mature American ginseng plant at the American Ginseng Pharm in Upstate New York. Photo courtesy of Anna Plattner

This page: Sacking ginseng seed, 1930, Wausau, Wisconsin. Photo by W.I. LaCerte, courtesy of the Marathon County Historical Society

PROGRAM THEMES

- ☀️ **Traditional Knowledge** presents the skills of a wide variety of experts in growing, harvesting, trading, prescribing, and researching American ginseng—from Appalachian “seng hunters” to Wisconsin family farmers, from traditional Chinese medicine practitioners to conservation biologists.
- ☀️ **Global Connections** examines how American ginseng has connected the United States to Asia for almost 250 years, through trade and traditional medicine.
- ☀️ **Looking to the Future** offers insight into conservation efforts, innovative uses, and new markets for American ginseng, ensuring a future for this important plant.

PROGRAM IMPACT

- ☀️ During 10 days on the National Mall, the program will reach an estimated 700,000 visitors from the United States and around the world.
- ☀️ Web features such as blogs, an online exhibition, and social media posts will reach millions of readers not able to attend the Festival.
- ☀️ Visitors will learn about “hunting” ginseng deep in the Appalachian forest, using ginseng in traditional Chinese medicine, cooking with ginseng, and promoting good stewardship of the plant and its environs.
- ☀️ The program will forge an important link between traditional knowledge and STEM education, with informal learning experiences in person as well as Smithsonian Learning Lab features for teachers and students.
- ☀️ National recognition of the importance of American ginseng to regional culture, economy, ecology, and medicine will help further efforts to conserve the plant and its habitats.

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