

April 13, 1997
For Immediate Release

Contact:
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Interest in Growing American Ginseng Creates Two-Day Conference

Andover, Maine - A recent media announcement that a group of interested growers of American Ginseng in Maine had formed a non-profit organization, has created such a public response, that the group's organizers have decided to present a two-day conference on the many aspects of growing and selling ginseng in Maine.

The Maine Ginseng Growers Association, an organization that was formed in the Fall of 1996, announced in February of this year of its recent incorporation and offered to provide information to the public about the group and the ginseng growing process. "Within days the public response to our announcement was overwhelming", reported the Association's President, John Berg of Andover, "we never imagined that we would receive the number of letters and calls for information about who we are and what we do. We soon realized, that since we were a new organization with limited financial resources, we were not going to be able to provide enough complete information, either through the mail or on the phone, to satisfy each individual inquiry on this matter. After a discussion among our Board Members, it was decided that the best way to resolve the public demand for information would be to present a two-day conference in the Spring. After a lot of work, we are ready to go."

Joining the Maine Ginseng Growers Association as a co-sponsor of the Conference will be the Umbagog Naturalist Institute, of Andover Maine. This agricultural research and educational center currently has one of the first commercial wild-simulated ginseng growing programs in the State of Maine. The Institute is staffed with educators, naturalists and master herbalists who provide a wide variety of seminars in the fields of Herbology and Alternative Agriculture each Summer. Researchers at the Institute are also involved in an on-going international project with scientists at the Biodome de Montreal, Montreal, Quebec Canada, in the study of wild ginseng within the Northeast tier of the U.S. and Canada.

The Conference, will be held at Mountain Valley High School in Rumford, Maine on Sat and Sun., May 3rd and 4th, starting at 9am each day. Costs for the two-day conference are \$10 for the general public. The sponsors of the Conference promise to attempt to answer any and all questions that the general public might have on the growing and selling of wild-simulated American Ginseng. To accomplish this, speakers from the State and Federal Governments, local researchers, business professionals, and a representative from a Canadian ginseng growers Association will provide a wide range of subject matter which should satisfy all interests on this highly-prized agricultural product.

For an event itinerary and pre-registration application please write to : Maine Ginseng Growers Association, Inc. P.O. Box 382, Andover, Maine 04216.

-End-

Speaker Profile

Dr. Michael Dubois

Dr. Michael Dubois is an Herbologist and has a degree in Naturopathic Medicine. He is President of the Umbagog Trading Company, a producer of nutritional food and health supplements made with American Ginseng. The products are marketed under the brand name, Mollocket. He is also Director of the Umbagog Naturalist Institute, located in Andover Maine, where he has spent the last ten years growing and studying American Ginseng. He is regarded by many in the National Field of Herbology, to be the leading expert on American Ginseng in the State of Maine.

Mr. David Sharkey

Mr. David Sharkey is President of the Pontiac Woodland Ginseng Association, an organization of agriculturalists and scientists engaged in the commercial production of woodland grown ginseng, located in Quebec Province, Canada. He will address "across the Border relationships" and detail the Canadian ginseng growers program, which includes Government support in the form of research and development.

Rep. John Baker, D - Dixfield

Rep. John Baker is an educator and freshman legislator from Dixfield, Maine. He currently serves as a member of the Legislative Agricultural Committee in Augusta. He is actively involved in promoting the economic potential for Maine farmers and gardeners in growing alternative crops, such as American Ginseng.

Ms. Ann Gibbs

Ms. Ann Gibbs is the Horticulturist for the State of Maine. Working under the Department of Agriculture, Food & Rural Resources, she is responsible for all site inspections and the issuing of ginseng growing licenses to Maine residents.

Mr. Jeff Porter

Mr. Jeff Porter, a graduate of the University of Southern Maine in 1987, was an aide to U.S. Senator George Mitchell, D-Maine, from 1987 to 1995. While on Mitchell's staff he worked on a variety of international trade issues, including the North American Free Trade Agreement. In 1995, he joined the Department of Commerce as an international trade specialist. He is currently stationed in Portland, Maine and is actively working to assist Maine businesses to understand and resolve the complexities of international trade.

July 16, 1997
For Immediate release

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World-Renowned Herbalist to Lecture in Auburn

Auburn, Maine - Maine herbal enthusiasts are being treated to a special event in Auburn this summer. On Tuesday, July 29, at the Auburn Middle School, on outer Court Street in Auburn, world-renowned Herbalist and Maine native, Steven Foster, will present a lecture and slide program entitled "Ginseng and other Medicinal Plants of the Northeast". The program is scheduled to start at 7:00PM. Prior to the Lecture, Foster, will participate in a book-signing, in conjunction with the local "Bookland" store. A variety of Foster's books will be on hand for purchase. The book-signing is scheduled to begin at 6PM. Cost for the program is \$5.00, which will be collected at the door. The event is being sponsored by The Maine Ginseng Growers Association.

Foster, who for over twenty-two years, has served as a medicinal and aromatic plant specialist, commercial consultant, writer, lecturer, and photographer, currently is recognized as one of the leading world authorities on the historical and medicinal effect of herbs, many of which are currently being used in the field of Alternative Medicine today. His interest in herbs began at an early age.

Starting in 1974, at age 17, Foster began his career at the Sabbathday Lake, Maine, Shaker Community Herb Department - America's oldest herb business dating to 1799 - where he established three acres of production gardens and managed 1700 acres for the commercial harvest of botanicals. From his humble beginning at Shaker Village, to becoming one of the most respected consultants in the field of herbal health has been a long and difficult journey. His success has achieved only through many hours of hard work and dedication.

He is the author of nine books on herbal health and alternative medicine, his latest titled, **Herbs for Your Health**, published by Interweave Press in 1996. He is probably best known to herbalists as co-author, with Dr. James A. Duke, of the popular, **A Field Guide to Medicinal Plants of Eastern and Central North America**, one of the books in the Petersen Field Guide Series, published by Houghton Mifflin Co. in 1990

Along with his writing, Foster operates, "Steven Foster Photography". This unique business offers America's largest stock photo files of medicinal and aromatic plants available for commercial and editorial licensing(30,000 + images). To this date, he has been credited with over 2,000 published photographs.

Foster currently serves as Associate Editor for various herbal publications such as, **Herbalgram**, **The Business of Herbs**, and the **Journal of Herbs, Spices, and Medicinal Plants**. He is the Editor of *Botanical & Herb Reviews*, a supplement in **The Herb Companion** magazine. In addition, he serves as Contributing Editor of **Herbs for Health**, magazine and is Special Publications Editor for the American Botanical Council.

-End-

Farmers taking chance on ginseng for 2000

By Melissa Moore

A number of landowners in Maine are planting ginseng rootlets, with the idea that by 2000 they will have an extremely valuable crop to bring to market.

The ginseng in these plots is considered "woods grown" or "wild simulated" and therefore is nearly seven times more valuable than the "field grown" ginseng being cultivated at other sites around the country. Mike Dubois, with the Umbagog Trading Company in Mexico, Maine reported that four year old-field cultivated ginseng is apt to fetch \$35 per pound (American), while six-year woods grown or wild simulated ginseng currently sells for \$275 per pound.

DuBois, a scientist and botanist by training, has been a key figure in assisting these growers with their plantings. He has spearheaded this effort since ginseng and mushroom cultivation are two areas he has researched extensively through his work at the Umbagog Naturalist Institute in Andover, Maine.

DuBois said growers are first attracted to the idea of growing ginseng because it strikes them as a way to earn some supplemental income from their land. In order to thrive, ginseng needs a well drained location, that is shaded, and has a good forest canopy of hardwood trees.

Generally for woods grown ginseng, people set out one to two year old rootlets in October or November, after the broad-leaf trees have lost their leaves. Dubois said a number of growers are getting started with 1/4 or 1/2 acre plots. "The projected return on this is very good," he added.

Grant Power of Auburn, Maine planted his first rootlets in 1995. He said, "Growing ginseng does entail work, and you can loose it all to disease just like any other agricultural crop. However it is an opportunity that makes sense for many, simply because the soils and climate in New England are well suited to ginseng production."

North American Ginseng is an indigenous plant, that once grew throughout New England's hardwood forests. Historically, Maine in particular was very active in the ginseng trade with some large transactions occurring as early as 1712. Wild gathering continued for hundreds of

years, until the pressure from continuous harvesting caused native ginseng to nearly disappear around the Depression years. This is one reason why it's considered an endangered species today.

Some states have banned wild gatherings of ginseng. Other states like Vermont and New York, still allow a season, but it is tightly regulated for the purpose of protecting the plant species.

Because it is a plant that is so closely monitored, growers who intend to sell their crop out-of-state or overseas, must be licensed with the state. Ann Gibbs, the state horticulturalist for Maine, reported that she works with 56 licensed growers - 15 of which planted for the first time last year.

Before a grower plants, Gibbs must be called in to inspect the site. Her job is to make note of any wild ginseng that is present, and growers are instructed to plant away from these sites and leave the wild plants undisturbed.

The licensed growers are required to document with a paper trail all details related to their plantings. At periodic intervals, Gibbs will travel out to do a spot check to make sure the paperwork gives with what's in the field. In addition to describing the location of all planted rootlets, the paperwork must document what cultivation practices, such as fertilizing, were performed.

This paperwork is crucial when it comes to harvest time. Gibbs must weigh all the roots from each individual grower, and account for the source of each root.

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SWOAM News

Small Woodland Owners
Association of Maine

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SWOAM RECEIVES 1997 OUTSTANDING FOREST STEWARDSHIP AWARD

SWOAM, along with ten landowners, consulting foresters, and others who made educational contributions to further good forestry in Maine received Arbor Week awards on May 22 from Governor Angus S. King, Jr.

The award was accepted for SWOAM by its president, Benjamin Welch. Others receiving awards for their individual efforts included several SWOAM members: Everett Towle, forester and SWOAM's newly elected vice president, Daren Turner, forester, and Sandra and Jim Pottle, landowners. The ceremony was held in the cistern at the Pine Tree State Arboretum.

A surprise, special award was given to Al Johnson, departing Executive Director of the Arboretum, to

(continued on page 8)

WESTWARD HO!

SWOAM bids farewell to Al Johnson, Executive Director of the Pine Tree State Arboretum. Al and Ruth are leaving Maine to be near their children and grandchildren in Wisconsin.

Over the last seven years Al has carried out the vision of the Arboretum founders and transformed 224 acres of the farm that served the Augusta Mental Health Institute, from some occasionally used Public Land to a year-round educational and recreational center and a place for contemplation. Doing much of the physical work himself, as well as working cooperatively with others, Al has made the Arboretum into one of Augusta's treasures.



Al Johnson in Arboretum woodlot.
A standard cord is stacked behind him.

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Before taking up his "retirement profession" as Executive Director of the Arboretum, Al had been a forester with the U.S. Forest Service for 30 years. He is also a woodlot owner, tree farmer, and member of SWOAM.

(continued on page 6)

GINSENG REBORN

Renewed Interest Shown in Mystical Medical Plant

Excerpted from article by Catherine Sengel, Biddeford, *Journal Tribune*, Staff Writer

At the turn of the century, Maine did such a lively trade in its wild ginseng, the species was nearly obliterated. Use of the root, which was touted as a remedy for everything from stress to impotence, waned in the succeeding decades, however.

REBIRTH

Now it seems the time has come again for ginseng. Medicine's bent toward holistic healing and a natural pharmacopoeia is generating product lines from teas to tinctures featuring ginseng as a key ingredient. The quest for innovative avenues of economic development coupled with the drive toward sustaining timberlands has prompted a new look at Maine ginseng as a lucrative and highly marketable commodity.

A plant that thrives in 70 to 90 percent shade under deciduous hardwoods, needs soils rich in mineral content and rugged winters, ginseng has always been well-rooted in the state.

Ginseng is a deciduous perennial. It grows best on northern slopes of hardwood forests nestled in leaf mold and moisture.

In May or June a cluster of five to 20 flowers arise from the center of the whorl of leaves with a tiny greenish-yellow blossom. From August through October the plant produces a clump of two to three seeded bright red berries. Roots are harvested in the fall, traditionally on the down side of a full moon. Root stocks typically take between five to seven years to reach maturity.

Researchers within the state and in conjunction with growers in Quebec have worked to develop a cultivated strain of the crop that closely simulates wild ginseng, making it exceedingly attractive to Asian importers.

Growing can be tricky, however. Plants are susceptible to varmints and viruses, but success

could easily supplement income from more long-term investments like timber growth.

One Hollis landowner and member of the Maine Ginseng Growers Association who asked not to be named, said she and her husband set 3,200 plants into the ground last fall and are anxiously awaiting a first spring sighting of results.

"Planting those rootlets turned out to be quite a job," she said. "We thought we were going to be able to plant over a weekend." It ended up taking several.

"We don't think we're going to get rich by any means, but we have our land in Tree Growth and growing ginseng was a way to make the forest sustainable without chopping it all down," she said. "It's a way to make a little extra income. It could be profitable without being exploitive."

GROWING INTEREST

Ann Gibbs, state horticulturist for the Department of Agriculture said interest in ginseng has been widening steadily in the past few years.

Over the decade there'd be one or two inquiries a year about growing and marketing ginseng. Someone would see an article and make a call, but few if any ever pursued the process.

Until serious interest developed, the Department avoided the arduous process of applying for certification and getting regulations in place. Now, Gibbs said, the state is willing, able and quick to offer assistance.

Wild ginseng is endangered and its exportation is monitored by international law. Only ginseng certified as cultivated can be shipped and sold.

Applicants have land surveyed by the state to insure that no wild ginseng is growing in the neighborhood of the proposed cultivation, and licensed accordingly.

Gibbs says over the century logging operations wiped out a lot of the wild ginseng and the few stands that are still thriving are relatively inaccessible. The type that's being grown is "wild

as wild ginseng to produce many of same properties.

There's an increased interest internationally in Maine ginseng because the state's topography is similar to areas the plant grows wild in China and Maine's product is more potent than varieties field-grown in the Midwest.

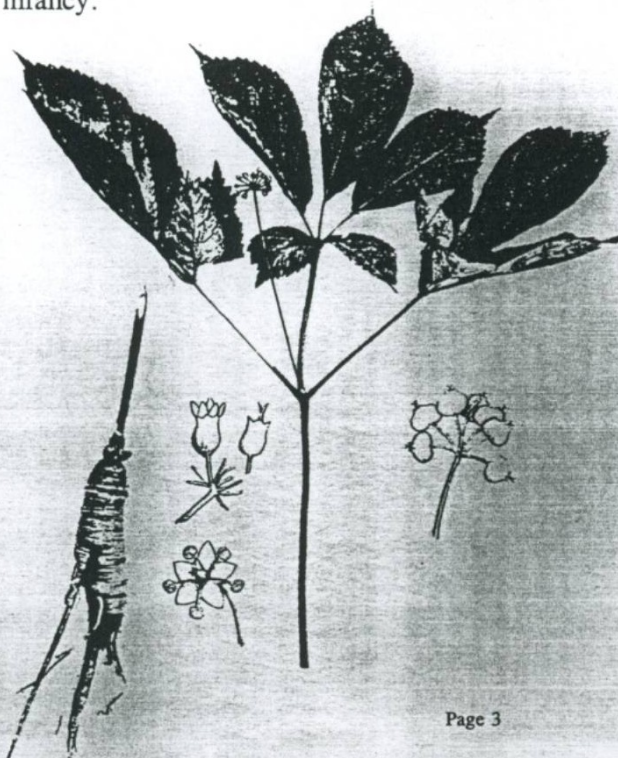
"It's one step down with slightly different active ingredients than Asian ginseng, so it has slightly different effects. That's part of the allure and the mystique," according to Gibbs.

GROWING MARKET

Members of the Maine Ginseng Growers Association now number about 60 with interest increasing annually. Maine growers seem to be an enthusiastic group, working both collectively and constructively to develop a solid Maine based industry, according to Gibbs. Most are proceeding cautiously.

The goal of the MeGGA is to increase growers from 70 to 400 over the next few years. With an eye toward the 21st century, long-term plans include bringing buyers from the Orient into the state to build direct sales.

"It's an industry," Gibbs says, "that's just in its infancy."



ROOT SOUGHT AFTER AS SOURCE OF LONGEVITY AND POTENCY

reprinted from *Biddeford Journal Tribune*

For 5,000 years the Chinese have revered and ingested the root *jin (man) chen (shaped)* as giver of life. Ginseng was harvested as a sacred ritual attended by priests and timed with the movement of the heavens.

Whether through chemical properties or mass belief, ginseng's reputation as a botanical aphrodisiac capable of prolonging sexual potency well into old age has proved its most marketable characteristic. That it was also regarded as a panacea (thus the *panax* in its Latin name) has made it doubly attractive as an elixir taken much the way we take vitamins.

A French missionary traveling in Manchuria studied the growth and promise of *panax* ginseng. His research reached a missionary in Montreal who showed drawings to the local Mohawks. The natives recognized the plant as a cousin to a familiar five-leaved plant indigenous from Quebec to Georgia.

Natives had long believed the ginseng quieted the animal spirits, dispelled fears, expelled toxins from the body, calmed the soul, brightened the eyes and promised sexual rejuvenation, a belief that approached mythical proportions.

Samples were sent to France for positive identification and the market was tested in China. As it turned out, the wild Western species had as high or higher a level of active ingredients as the Eastern variety.

A brisk trade soon developed that led to the Canadian Ginseng Rush of 1715. By the mid-1700s Canada was running out and the U.S. was launching clipper shiploads of its own ginseng from Boston to the Orient. Plantations sprang up across the Midwest to the Eastern seaboard to keep up with demand from France and the Far East. Peak traffic reached a quarter of a million pounds annually by 1913 at \$7.50 per pound.

Overharvesting depleted aboriginal stands and the wild plant is now listed as endangered. Harvesting for export is governed by international law.

Benefits are still believed to go beyond superstition. Tentative results of scientific studies done throughout the world including some in the U.S., indicate ginseng strengthens the vitality of endocrine glands to enhance metabolism of vitamins and minerals and regulate hormonal flow.

Tests tend to support Chinese and Japanese findings that ginseng has anti-stress, anti-fatigue and anti-infective properties to strengthen general mental and physical vitality while regulating blood sugars and compensating for deficiencies in vitamins B1 and B2. Soviet studies have found ginseng helps reduce both hypo- and hyper-tension, depending on use.

Use of the root has also been said to reduce trygliceride and cholesterol levels, and reduce inflammation when applied to burns. It is also said to offer some protection against radiation.

The Maine Ginseng Growers Association hosted "The Northern Tier Ginseng Conference, on ginseng growth and an overview of related issues on May 3-4 Rumford. For a brochure and further information about the MeGGA write Maine Ginseng Growers Association, P. O. Box 382, Andover, ME 04216.

FIRST PATENT ISSUED FOR A SPRUCE HYBRID*

In this era of genetic engineering and even the cloning of mammals, scientific breakthroughs seem to be the norm rather than the exception.

Accordingly, Forgene, Inc., a biotechnology company in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, has received the first U.S. general patent for a tree.

The Super Tree is genetically-improved white spruce that can grow twice as fast as a normal spruce tree. Forgene claims that hybrids will produce pulpwood for the paper industry at 20 years instead of the current normal age of 40 years, and for lumber production at 40 instead of 80 years.

About 150 million white spruce seedlings are planted each year in the United States and Canada.

(*reprinted from *National Woodlands*, July 1997)

ELSEWHERE

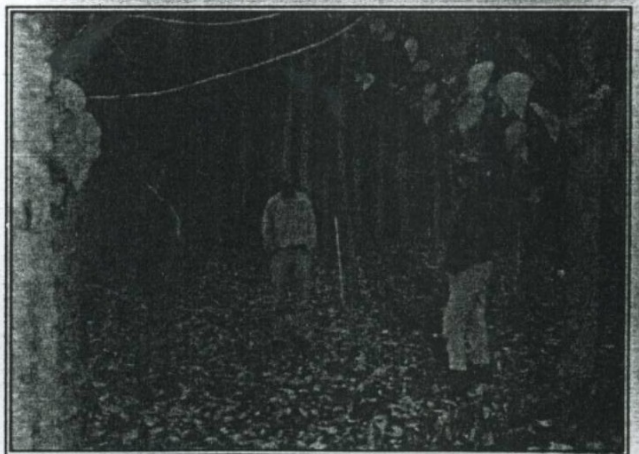
In New Hampshire, the legislature has just passed An Act modifying the definitions of "agriculture" and "farming" for certain purposes and adding definitions of "short rotation tree fiber farming" and "genetically engineered tree."

This bill allows short rotation fiber farming -- similar to Christmas tree farming, to be classified as agriculture. Short rotation farming, with planted species on rotations under fifteen years, is being considered on some idle farmland in Coos County, according to the New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association quarterly, *Timber Crier*, Spring 1997.

YET ELSEWHERE

Boise Cascade is farming rapid-growing hybrid cottonwood - a relative of aspen - in Washington. Shown in the photo below is forester Steve Pottle, of Kennewick, WA. Steve's parents, Sandra and Jim Pottle of Perry, ME were visiting. The hybrid cottonwood that Steve is raising for Boise reaches a diameter of 12 inches (height of 80 feet) in about seven years.

The cottonwood plantations - 17,000 acres so far, with increased acreage planned, are irrigated and fertilized. Under Washington law, their short growing time allows them to be classified as an agricultural product.



7-year old cottonwood, ready to harvest