

CHAPTER 78  
GINSENG HARVESTING AND SALE

Chapter rescission date pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.7: 6/17/31

**571—78.1(456A) Definitions.** All words and phrases used in these rules shall have their ordinary and customary meaning, except that the following words and phrases shall be defined as follows:

“*Controlled conditions*” means an environment that is manipulated by human intervention for the purpose of plant production. Characteristics of controlled conditions include but are not limited to tillage, fertilization, weed and pest control, irrigation, or artificial shade or light or nursery operations such as potting, bedding, or protection from weather.

“*Cultivated or artificially propagated ginseng*” means ginseng that is nurtured, propagated or maintained under controlled conditions from a seed, cutting, division, callus tissue, root, rhizome, other plant tissue, spore, or other propagule that has been derived from cultivated parental stock.

“*Cultivated parental stock*” means plants grown under controlled conditions that are used for reproduction and must be maintained in sufficient quantities for propagation.

“*Cutting*” or “*division*” means a plant grown from the root, rhizome, stem, or leaf of another plant and is considered to be artificially propagated if the specimen comes from cultivated parental stock.

“*Dealer*” means any person who deals in ginseng, which includes without limitation buying, selling, purchasing, holding, brokering, billing for, bartering, trading or otherwise receiving payment for wild or cultivated ginseng in Iowa for the purpose of selling or otherwise transacting wild or cultivated ginseng. “*Dealer*” includes any person, including without limitation a harvester, who sells ginseng to any person other than a dealer licensed pursuant to these rules or lawfully licensed in another state.

“*Dealer’s permit*” means a permit issued to a dealer by the department under these rules.

“*Department*” means the Iowa department of natural resources.

“*Director*” means the director of the Iowa department of natural resources or a designee.

“*Ginseng*” means all parts of the American Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) plant, including without limitation roots, rhizomes, leaves and seeds, which may be cultivated or wild. “*Ginseng*,” for purposes of these rules, does not mean those parts of the American Ginseng plant that have been processed.

“*Green ginseng*” means a root of ginseng from which the moisture has not been removed by drying. For the purposes of these rules, the amount of dried ginseng rhizome that can be derived from green ginseng rhizome shall be calculated using a ratio of three and three-tenths to one (3.3:1) by weight.

“*Grower*” means a person who grows cultivated ginseng for the purpose of selling the ginseng.

“*Grower’s permit*” means a permit issued under these rules to a grower.

“*Harvester*” means any person who harvests, possesses, transports, cuts, gathers, destroys, digs or uproots wild ginseng for the purpose of selling the ginseng or for personal use.

“*Harvester’s permit*” means a permit issued under these rules to a harvester.

“*Nonresident*” means a person other than a resident as defined by Iowa Code section 483A.1A.

“*Permits*” means dealer’s permits, grower’s permits and harvester’s permits issued under these rules.

“*Resident*” means a resident as defined by Iowa Code section 483A.1A.

“*Root*” means the ginseng rhizome and its roots.

“*True leaves*” or “*prongs*” means compound leaves that include five leaflets consisting of three large leaflets and two small leaflets.

“*Wild ginseng*” means an unprocessed plant, dry or green root, rhizome, seed or other part of ginseng, which is growing in or has been collected from its native habitat, including wild ginseng plants that have arisen from a wild seed that is planted in the wild or that have been transplanted into native habitat. Wild ginseng is ginseng that has not been grown or nurtured by a person beyond planting of seeds or plant.

“*Wild simulated*” ginseng means an unprocessed plant, dry or green root, rhizome, seed or other part of ginseng that is propagated, planted or collected in an environment with some level of human intervention for the purpose of plant production. All “wild ginseng” rules shall apply to this classification.

[ARC 0268D, IAB 5/13/26, effective 6/17/26]

**571—78.2(456A) Season for legal harvest.** The season for legally harvesting ginseng is September 1 through October 31.

[ARC 0268D, IAB 5/13/26, effective 6/17/26]

**571—78.3(456A) General prohibitions.**

**78.3(1) Harvest.** From November 1 through the following August 31, no person shall harvest, dig, cut, uproot, gather, intentionally disturb, or destroy ginseng, whether the ginseng is wild, wild simulated, or cultivated ginseng. This prohibition shall not apply to the transplantation or intentional disturbance of cultivated ginseng when such activities are incidental to the cultivation and growing of cultivated ginseng in a nursery business.

**78.3(2) Sale.** A person, other than a dealer licensed pursuant to these rules, shall not sell ginseng from March 16 through August 31.

**78.3(3) Sale and possession of green ginseng.** A person shall not possess or transact business in green ginseng from November 21 through August 31 unless otherwise provided for by these rules.

**78.3(4) State-owned and state-managed lands.** In an effort to conserve and protect native stands of wild ginseng, the introduction of nonnative ginseng stock on state-owned or state-managed lands under the jurisdiction of the commission is prohibited, except in narrow circumstances as described in these rules. As such, a person shall not, at any time, possess, harvest, dig, cut, uproot, gather, plant, propagate, intentionally disturb or destroy ginseng or ginseng seed on state-owned or state-managed lands under the jurisdiction of the commission. Nothing in this chapter shall prohibit the department from taking measures on state-owned or state-managed lands under the jurisdiction of the commission to conserve and protect native wild ginseng, which may include without limitation planting and possessing seeds, or from carrying out other land management practices in areas where ginseng may be present.

[ARC 0268D, IAB 5/13/26, effective 6/17/26]

**571—78.4(456A) Ginseng permits.** The department shall issue a dealer's permit upon receipt of a signed and complete application. An application shall be submitted on the form provided by the department, and payment of the appropriate fee shall be included with the application. Grower's and harvester's permits are available for sale through the department's electronic licensing system. The department shall not issue a permit if the department determines that the permit will be detrimental to the survival of ginseng or will otherwise be in contravention of the laws of this state or applicable federal laws. A person shall not carry, possess or use any other person's permit issued pursuant to these rules, except as specifically provided by these rules.

**78.4(1) Duplicate permits.** A duplicate grower's permit, harvester's permit or dealer's permit may be issued upon application to the department and the payment of a \$4.50 fee plus any charges associated with the department's electronic licensing system.

**78.4(2) Grower's permits.**

*a.* A person must obtain a permit from the department to legally grow cultivated ginseng and make the permit available upon request by any peace officer. There is no fee for the permit, except for the charge associated with the department's electronic licensing system.

*b.* A grower's permit shall be valid for five years from the date of issuance.

**78.4(3) Harvester's permits.**

*a.* Any person who harvests wild ginseng must have a valid harvester's permit issued by the department and shall produce such permit upon request to any peace officer or the owner or person in lawful control of the land upon which the permittee may be harvesting wild ginseng while the person is engaged in harvesting activities, including the person's moving to or from the harvest site, transporting ginseng and selling of the harvested ginseng.

*b.* A harvester's permit may be obtained through the department's electronic licensing system for a fee of \$35 for residents and \$65 for nonresidents plus any charges associated with the department's electronic licensing system.

*c.* A harvester's permit shall be valid from September 1 through March 15 of the following year.

*d.* A harvester who has a valid harvester's permit may sell wild ginseng from September 1 through March 15 of the following year.

e. A harvester with a valid harvester's permit may retain no more than four ounces of dry wild ginseng for personal consumption for one year beyond the expiration date of the permit. All wild or wild simulated ginseng possessed pursuant to this paragraph shall be for the harvester's personal use only and cannot be lawfully sold.

f. No person may sell, barter or otherwise offer for sale any ginseng that has been unlawfully collected, obtained or possessed in violation of this chapter, the Iowa Code, or the Code of Federal Regulations.

**78.4(4) Dealer's permits.**

a. A dealer in Iowa must have a valid dealer's permit issued by the department and make the permit available upon request by any peace officer. A dealer's paid employees and family members who work at a dealer's primary place of business as identified on the dealer's permit may operate legally under the dealer's permit. For purposes of this subrule, family members include a dealer's spouse, domestic partner, parents, siblings, and children.

b. In order to be considered, an application for a dealer's permit shall be made on the form provided by the department, be complete, and be executed by the person seeking the dealer's permit.

c. Dealer's permits shall be issued that authorize a person to deal in any amount of ginseng in a license year. The permit application shall be accompanied by a \$250 permit fee for Iowa residents and a \$500 permit fee for nonresidents plus any charges associated with the department's electronic licensing system.

d. A dealer's permit shall be valid for a license year, from April 1 until March 31 of the following year.

e. A dealer's permit must be shown to the department when the department is certifying ginseng and must be shown to harvesters or other dealers when the dealer is buying ginseng.

[ARC 0268D, IAB 5/13/26, effective 6/17/26]

**571—78.5(456A) Dealers—prohibitions.** A dealer shall not buy, deal, purchase, sell, or otherwise transact business of ginseng, its seeds, or its parts:

1. If the dealer knows or should have known that the ginseng was harvested illegally.
2. Without inspecting the permit of the harvester or dealer.
3. If the dealer knows or should have known that the harvester or dealer has violated this chapter.

[ARC 0268D, IAB 5/13/26, effective 6/17/26]

**571—78.6(456A) Dealers—recordkeeping.**

**78.6(1) Contents of records.** Each permitted ginseng dealer shall keep individual, accurate, legible and complete records of each ginseng transaction. The records shall be on forms prescribed by the department and completed in their entirety by the ginseng dealer or a representative of the department. The department will provide a reasonable number of these forms at no cost to the dealer. The dealer's record of each ginseng transaction shall include:

- a. The date of transaction;
- b. The name and address of the buyer or seller, whichever is applicable for the transaction;
- c. The harvester's permit number or dealer's permit number if a dealer is buying ginseng in the transaction;
- d. A description of the ginseng transacted, including the actual weight of the ginseng transacted and whether the ginseng is dried or green. If the ginseng is green ginseng, the weight shall also be converted to the dried weight of ginseng according to the ratio in 571—78.3(456A);
- e. The name of the county or counties where the ginseng was harvested if the ginseng is purchased from a harvester;
- f. A copy of the ginseng's certificate of origin, signed by the seller, if applicable;
- g. The year of harvest for the ginseng bought or sold; and
- h. Any additional information as requested by the department and included on the department's form.

**78.6(2) Monthly reporting.** Each dealer shall submit to the department copies of all records required by 78.7(1) on a monthly basis, no later than the fifteenth day of each month.

**78.6(3) Carryover report.** The dealer must complete an inventory of any roots remaining in the dealer's possession in Iowa as of April 1, including the roots' certified weight and designation as either wild, wild simulated, or cultivated ginseng, or a statement that the dealer has no roots remaining in the dealer's possession. Any certification regarding a root's weight as required by this subrule shall be completed through the department's agent upon appointment. Any roots carried over from one license year to the next shall be documented on the following license year's reports.

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**571—78.7(456A) Dealer locations.**

**78.7(1) Transact business.** Ginseng dealers shall transact business only at the location specified on the dealer's permit or at the place of business specified on the permit of any other dealer who holds a dealer's permit in Iowa and is involved in the transaction.

**78.7(2) Location permits.**

a. A dealer who wishes to transact business at a location other than the locations provided for in 78.8(1) may obtain a location permit from the department. Each location permit shall be valid only for the location specified, on the dates and times listed on the location permit, and shall entitle the dealer to operate at that location in addition to the location specified on the corresponding dealer's permit.

b. The department shall, upon application and payment of the applicable location permit fee, furnish a location permit to the dealer. The location permit fee shall be \$5 for residents and \$50 for nonresidents plus any charge associated with the department's electronic licensing system.

**78.7(3) Duplicate location permits.** A duplicate location permit may be issued upon application to the department and the payment of a \$4.50 fee plus any charge associated with the department's electronic licensing system.

[ARC 0268D, IAB 5/13/26, effective 6/17/26]

**571—78.8(456A) Certificates of origin.**

**78.8(1) Shipments.** Every shipment of ginseng to a location outside the state of Iowa by a grower, harvester or dealer shall be accompanied by a certificate of origin, or shipping certificate, that certifies that the ginseng was lawfully harvested.

a. The department will issue a certificate of origin for cultivated ginseng to a grower or dealer on a form provided by the department based upon the permit holder's compliance with the requirements of this chapter.

b. The department will issue a certificate of origin for wild or wild simulated ginseng to a harvester on a form provided by the department based upon the permit holder's compliance with the requirements of this chapter.

c. The certificate of origin for cultivated, wild simulated, and wild ginseng will be issued by the department's agent after the roots have been weighed and certified upon appointment.

**78.8(2) Wild ginseng originating in another state.**

a. No person may ship in or out of this state to or from another state or foreign country any ginseng that originates in another state or foreign country without a valid certificate of origin issued by that other state or foreign country.

b. If a resident dealer receives wild ginseng that originated in another state and if a certificate of origin issued by that state does not accompany the wild ginseng, the dealer shall return the wild ginseng to the sender immediately upon its receipt.

c. A dealer shall maintain a copy of the certificate of origin with the record of the transaction.

d. It shall be lawful for any person to have in possession any ginseng lawfully harvested or purchased outside Iowa and lawfully brought into the state so long as the person possesses a valid certificate of origin for the ginseng.

[ARC 0268D, IAB 5/13/26, effective 6/17/26]

**571—78.9(456A) Records retention.** Any records required by this chapter to be maintained or submitted shall be produced for inspection upon request by the department, director, officer appointed by the department, or peace officer. All records under this chapter must be retained for a period of three years

after the expiration of the grower's, harvester's, or dealer's permit. Failure to maintain records or to submit reports as required by these rules is a violation of these rules.

[ARC 0268D, IAB 5/13/26, effective 6/17/26]

**571—78.10(456A) Restrictions and prohibitions for harvesting wild ginseng.**

**78.10(1)** No person shall harvest a plant unless the plant possesses three or more true leaves or prongs and a flowering or fruiting stalk with red berries. If, after a person removes a plant from the soil with the requisite leaves or prongs, it is determined the root has less than five stem scars, the person shall return the plant to the soil at the same location and make best efforts to return the plant and the surrounding area to their condition prior to harvest of the plant. In no event shall a person harvest or possess a wild ginseng root unless the root has at least five stem scars.

**78.10(2)** When a person harvests ginseng, the entire plant, except the fruit and seeds, shall be retained until the plant is taken to the harvester's residence or place of business, as identified in the harvester's permit.

[ARC 0268D, IAB 5/13/26, effective 6/17/26]

**571—78.11(456A) Additional restrictions and prohibitions for ginseng.**

**78.11(1)** All persons harvesting wild or wild simulated ginseng shall plant all seeds collected from such plants within 100 feet of the parent plant. Seeds collected for planting pursuant to this subrule should be collected from the fruit by gently pressing the fruit of the ginseng.

**78.11(2)** A person shall use no tool other than the person's finger to plant ginseng seeds and shall not push seeds to a depth greater than one inch into the soil.

**78.11(3)** A person shall not possess or transport seeds of wild or wild simulated ginseng more than 100 feet from the site of the parent plant.

[ARC 0268D, IAB 5/13/26, effective 6/17/26]

**571—78.12(456A) Compliance with laws.** A person shall not violate any state, federal or local laws in harvesting, dealing or shipping ginseng.

[ARC 0268D, IAB 5/13/26, effective 6/17/26]

**571—78.13(456A) Violations of this chapter.**

**78.13(1)** A person violating this chapter shall be subject to a scheduled fine pursuant to Iowa Code section 805.8B(4) and permit suspension, modification and revocation pursuant to 571—78.17(456A).

**78.13(2)** Each ginseng plant or part thereof, including any ginseng, unlawfully harvested, dealt, or shipped shall be a separate offense. More than one person per plant may be guilty of violating this chapter.

**78.13(3)** Materials determined by the department's law enforcement personnel to be contraband or to have been taken in violation of this chapter may be seized and disposed of in conformance with Iowa Code chapter 809.

[ARC 0268D, IAB 5/13/26, effective 6/17/26]

**571—78.14(456A) Possession.**

**78.14(1)** When a person is in possession of ginseng, including the shipping or transporting of ginseng, if one or more parts of ginseng are deemed unlawful, the entire contents of possession shall be deemed unlawful.

**78.14(2)** Any person or dealer who has in possession any ginseng or parts thereof shall upon request by the department, director, any officer appointed by the department, or peace officer show the ginseng to the department, director, or officer; a refusal to do so is a violation of this chapter.

[ARC 0268D, IAB 5/13/26, effective 6/17/26]

**571—78.15(456A) Valuation.** The value of seized ginseng that was harvested or possessed in violation of these rules shall be based on the current market value, as determined by the department.

[ARC 0268D, IAB 5/13/26, effective 6/17/26]

**571—78.16(456A) Revocation of permits.** Any permit issued pursuant to this chapter may be revoked, in whole or in part, by written notice if the department determines that the permit holder has violated any

provision of this chapter and determines that continuation of the permit is not in the public interest. Such revocation shall become effective upon a date specified in the notice. The notice shall state the extent of the revocation and the reasons for the action. Within 30 days following receipt of the notice of a revocation, the permit holder may file a notice of appeal, requesting a contested case pursuant to 561—Chapter 7. The notice of appeal shall specify the basis for requesting that the permit be reinstated.

[ARC 0268D, IAB 5/13/26, effective 6/17/26]

**571—78.17(456A) Reciprocity.** Nonresident harvesters, growers and dealers from states that regulate American Ginseng by allowing the harvesting, cultivating and dealing in American Ginseng but that prohibit Iowa harvesters, growers and dealers to lawfully operate in those states are not eligible for permits issued by the department.

[ARC 0268D, IAB 5/13/26, effective 6/17/26]

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