Music.

Chuck Kleine: Because ginseng is listed on CITES, an international treaty to protect threatened and endangered species from the demands of global trade, the West Virginia Division of Forestry is tasked every season with the job to certify every root that leaves the State.

Music.

Juergen Wildman: Ginseng digging season starts on September 1st and it ends on November 30th; it corresponds with when the seeds on the ginseng plant ripen. They don’t want you digging the root before the seeds ripen because they want you to naturally plant the seeds.

Music.

JW: As a ginseng digger you don’t need a license to dig ginseng. You can dig it, you know, as long as you dig it within those dates we just mentioned you can dig it legally but you have to have written permission if you’re going to go on somebody else’s land to dig it. The dealers have to get a license to sell ginseng, OK, to buyers. Ginseng diggers don’t have to do that, they sell it to the dealers, OK. Once a dealer gets the ginseng, they want to sell it out of state they have to bring it here we get it weighed and we fill out a certificate for them. That certificate has to follow that ginseng until it’s sold. Now there is one other thing here, you can sell ginseng up to March 31st, after that it cannot legally be sold in this state.

Music.

CK: According to the West Virginia Division of Forestry possession of ginseng root is prohibited from April 1st through August 31st without a weight receipt from the Division of Forestry. These regulations are enforced by the Department of Natural Resources.

JW: And they will write tickets for digging ginseng on public lands because in the State of West Virginia ginseng is not to be dug in state forests, state parks, other public lands.

CK: Additional regulations require each harvested plant to be at least five years old.

JW: It’s just a natural component of the forest, you know. It just happens to be a medicinal plant that people can use. And you generally find it on cool sites, in forested areas where it’s very moist. They like a certain type of habitat and that’s where you look for them.

CK: Each year West Virginia harvests between 15 and 20 thousand pounds of what is considered some of the highest priced quality ginseng in the world bringing top prices in Chinese markets. For West Virginia Public Broadcasting, I’m Chuck Kleine in Morgantown.

Music.