

# A Survey of Some Marketable Wild Plants

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*This survey summarizes price lists from six herb and root buyers. It provides a list of plants by common and scientific name and prices paid in 1979.*

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For centuries, wild roots and herbs have been collected in the United States for personal use and sale. Many people still gather plants for home use, as a hobby, and as an income supplement. Plants and plant parts are sold through agents or dealers and are eventually used by medicinal and health food companies and for a number of other purposes.

Ginseng (*panax quinquefolium*) has long been the most important of collected wild plants; "sang" has been found in most Eastern States. Its root commands the greatest interest, demand, and price from buyers and collectors. Most of the wild ginseng gathered in this country is exported. Root and herb buyers also purchase many other common plants. Therefore, the harvest of wild plants may be of concern to managers of public and private lands and forests. A survey of root and herb buyers was made in the fall of 1979. Price lists were obtained from six buyers with home offices in Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, and Virginia.

The purpose of the study was to determine the demand and prices for collected wild plants and to attempt to catalog these species. The results of the survey are given in table 1.

Only plants whose scientific names could be located and confirmed by references were included in the table. Common names of plants vary widely from region to region, and this can lead to confusion and harvest of the wrong plants. Only one company attempted to provide scientific names for particular plants. The number of different species purchased varied. The two largest companies listed about 80

herbs, barks, or roots that they will purchase.

Prices also varied among companies. Prices for given plants and plant parts will fluctuate depending on supply and demand, popularity, commercial promotion of an item, and harvest conditions.

The prices of many plants are not great enough to encourage widespread harvest; others, however, are valuable. Many of these are somewhat scarce in our woods at present. Research on commercial cultivation of these species is warranted to help protect many of our wild plants.

**Table 1.—Common and scientific names and prices for several marketable wild roots, herbs, and barks.<sup>1</sup>**

Common names and scientific name	Number of buyers listing	Price per pound		
		High	Low	Average
Maidenhair fern <i>Adiantum pedatum</i>	1	—	—	.80
Stargrass root (colic-root) <i>Aletris farinosa</i>	6	4.50	3.00	3.34
Angelica root <i>Angelica atropurpurea</i>	2	.60	.50	.55
Black Indian hemp root (hemp dogbane, Indian hemp) <i>Apocynum cannabinum</i>	2	1.40	.25	.83
Spikenard root (spignet) <i>Aralia racemosa</i>	4	1.00	.50	.78
Burdock root <i>Arctium lappa</i>	2	.60	.35	.48

See footnotes at end of table.

**Table 1.**—Common and scientific names and prices for several marketable wild roots, herbs, and barks.<sup>1</sup> - Continued

Common names and scientific name	Number of buyers listing	Price per pound		
		High	Low	Average
Indian turnip root (Jack-in-the-pulpit) <i>Arisaema triphyllum</i>	2	.60	.40	.50
Virginia snakeroot <i>Aristolochia serpentaria</i>	4	12.13	8.00	11.03
Ginger (wild) root <i>Asarum canadense</i>	5	.53	.40	.47
Butterfly root (true pleurisy, orange milkweed) <i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	3	.80	.40	.57
Wild indigo root <i>Baptisia tinctoria</i>	1	—	—	.50
Yellow root (barberry) <i>Berberis vulgaris</i>	2	.30	.10	.20
Blue cohosh root <i>Caulophyllum thalictroides</i>	5	.60	.10	.34
Star roots (star grub, grub root, fairy wand) <i>Chamaeliium luteum</i>	6	4.00	2.00	3.04
Jerusalem oak seed <i>Chenopodium botrys</i>	1	—	—	.20
Fringetree root bark <i>Chionanthus virginica</i>	1	—	—	1.00
Black cohosh roots (black snake root) <i>Cimicifuga racemosa</i>	6	.85	.40	.64
Lady slipper root <i>Cypripedium calceolus</i>	6	6.05	2.50	4.34
Wild yam root <i>Dioscorea villosa</i>	2	.50	.25	.38
Wahoo (strawberry-bush)				
Tree bark	4	.61	.50	.55
Root bark <i>Euonymus americanus</i>	4	4.00	3.50	3.66
Queen-of-the-meadow root (Joe Pye) <i>Eupatorium fistulosum</i>	2	.70	.50	.60
Boneset herb <sup>2</sup> (cut up)	1	—	—	.15
Leaves and tops <i>Eupatorium perfoliatum</i>	1	—	—	.25

See footnotes at end of table.

**Table 1.**—Common and scientific names and prices for several marketable wild roots, herbs, and barks.<sup>1</sup> - Continued

Common names and scientific name	Number of buyers listing	Price per pound		
		High	Low	Average
Wild strawberry leaves <i>Fragaria virginiana</i>	1	—	—	.40
Cleavers herb <i>Galium aparine</i>	1	—	—	.40
Mountain tea herb (wintergreen) <i>Gaultheria procumbens</i>	4	.75	.60	.72
Huckleberry leaves <i>Gaylussacia sp.</i>	1	—	—	.20
Gelsemium (yellow jasmine, jessamine) <i>Gelsemium sempervirens</i>	1	—	—	.45
Sampson's snake root <i>Gentiana villosa</i>	1	—	—	.40
Cranesbill (wild alum, wild geranium) <i>Geranium maculatum</i>	5	.75	.60	.67
Witchhazel (beadwood) bark	3	.50	.30	.38
Leaves (bright) <i>Hamamelis virginiana</i>	5	.81	.65	.74
Hydrangea root (quiltweed) <i>Hydrangea arborescens</i>	3	.75	.50	.62
Goldenseal leaves	6	3.00	1.50	2.38
Roots <i>Hydrastis canadensis</i>	6	10.15	5.00	8.28
Twinleaf root <i>Jeffersonia diphylla</i>	2	.30	.30	.28
Butternut root bark <i>Juglans cinerea</i>	1	—	—	.35
Walnut hulls <i>Juglans nigra</i>	2	.15	.10	.13
Wild lettuce leaves	2	.60	.50	.55
Leaves and stalks <i>Lactuca scariola</i>	1	—	—	.35
Motherwort herb <i>Leonurus cardiaca</i>	1	—	—	.50
Lobelia herb (Indian tobacco) <i>Lobelia inflata</i>	5	1.00	.50	.76
Wood betony herb (Virginia bugleweed) <i>Lycopus virginicus</i>	1	—	—	.80

See footnotes at end of table.

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Horehound herb <i>Marrubium vulgare</i>	1	—	—	.15
Squaw vine (rockvine, partridge berry) <i>Mitchella repens</i>	2	1.00	.50	.75
Catnip herb (whole plant w/stem)	3	.75	.50	.58
Leaves <i>Nepeta cataria</i>	4	1.00	.75	.83
Ginseng root—wild	6	—	—	mkt. <sup>3</sup>
Ginseng root-cultivated <i>Panax quinquefolium</i>	2	—	—	mkt.
May-pop herb (passion flower) <i>Passiflora incarnata</i>	2	—	—	.30
Poke root	1	—	—	.20
Poke berries (dry) <i>Phytolacca americana</i>	1	—	—	.50
May apple root (Mandrake) <i>Polophyllum peltatum</i>	6	.83	.60	.74
Seneca snake root <i>Polygala senega</i>	5	3.50	3.00	3.16
Solomon's seal root <i>Polygonatum biflorum</i>	4	1.00	.65	.79
Wild plum bark <i>Prunus americana</i>	2	.25	.15	.20
Peach leaves <i>Prunus persica</i>	2	.60	.20	.40
Wild cherry bark (thin, natural)	4	.30	.20	.25
Bark (thick, natural)	4	.15	.04	.07
Wild cherries (dry) <i>Prunus serotina</i>	4	—	—	.50
Kudzu root <i>Pueraria lobata</i>	1	—	—	.50
White oak rowed bark <sup>4</sup>	2	—	—	.25
Natural bark <sup>4</sup> <i>Quercus alba</i>	1	—	—	.10
Sumac (smooth sumac) tree bark	2	—	—	.40
Root bark <i>Rhus glabra</i>	1	—	—	.75
Blackberry roots, cut up <i>Rubus sp.</i>	3	.30	.25	.27

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Common names and scientific name	Number of buyers listing	Price per pound		
		High	Low	Average
Raspberry leaves <i>Rubus sp.</i>	1	—	—	.30
Yellow dock root <i>Rumex crispus</i>	5	.75	.30	.62
Pussy willow buds (dried) <i>Salix discolor</i>	1	—	—	10.00
Blood root <i>Sanguinaria canadensis</i>	6	.50	.30	.37
Sassafras rossed root bark <sup>4</sup>	4	2.25	1.75	1.95
Natural root bark <sup>4</sup>	2	.61	.80	.71
Root (6 in. pieces)	2	.15	.80	.71
Leaves	4	.50	.45	.48
Tree bark <i>Sassafras albidum</i>	3	—	—	.15
Skullcap herb (mad-dog skullcap) <i>Scutellaria lateriflora</i>	1	—	—	.60
Pink root (Indian pink) <i>Spigelia marilandica</i>	4	3.50	1.50	2.50
Skunk cabbage root <i>Symplocarpus foetidus</i>	1	—	—	.40
Dandelion root <i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	3	.50	.30	.40
Red clover blooms <i>Trifolium pratense</i>	3	1.25	1.00	1.17
Beth root (erect trillium) <i>Trillium erectum</i>	6	1.00	.65	.81
Elm (slippery) rossed bark <sup>4</sup> <i>Ulmus rubra</i>	6	1.00	.63	.79
American hellebore root <i>Veratrum viride</i>	1	—	—	1.25
Mullein (mullen) leaves <i>Verbascum thapsus</i>	2	.40	.35	.38
Blue vervain herb <i>Verbena hastata</i>	1	—	—	.30
Black root (Culvers) <i>Veronicastrum virginicum</i>	5	3.55	2.00	2.92
Black haw root bark	3	.70	.60	.63
Rossed tree bark <sup>4</sup>	2	.65	.60	.63
Natural tree bark <sup>4</sup> <i>Viburnum prunifolium</i>	1	—	—	.65

See footnotes at end of table.

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		High	Low	Average
Prickly ash bark <i>Zanthoxylum (Xanthoxylum) americanum</i>	2	—	—	.75

<sup>1</sup>Information was obtained from price lists of six herb buyers. Only the average price is listed when prices were identical or when only one company listed a particular item.

<sup>2</sup>Herbs are leaves and stems of plants.

<sup>3</sup>Variable market price.

<sup>4</sup>Rossed bark is what remains after the outer bark is scraped off. Unrossed or natural bark is taken from the tree or root and left as is.

## References

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