

Folk-Ways and Folk-Speech

of SOUTHERN APPALACHIA
with Rogers Whitener

Send your suggestions for column material to Rogers Whitener, Box 376, Boone, N. C. 28601.



GINSENG SEEDS \$7.50;
1,000--\$12.50 WITH GROW-
ERS GUIDE.

The want ad above which appeared recently in the North Carolina Agricultural Review is similar to many others appearing in weekly papers, rural magazines, and farm publications over the past few years.

Two things may be inferred from such ads: one, wild ginseng is becoming more difficult to find; two, domestic use of ginseng is on the increase. Thus more and more of the cultivated plant is finding its way to

the market--but at a price far below that of the wild root.

At one time practically all North American ginseng was shipped to Oriental countries when it was learned in the early 18th century that the root found here was similar to the Asian variety. In the Orient, ginseng has, of course, long been held in veneration, not only for its health-giving properties but for its fabled contribution to masculine virility. Chewed, made into tea, mixed with food and occasionally with

the large general store in Valle Crucis, N.C., recalls buying "a thousand dollars worth of ginseng from one man some years ago when it brought about \$34 dollars a pound. Now it would be worth about twice that much." Mast, like many other small operation herb dealers, no longer purchases ginseng or other mountain herbs, leaving this business to the few large herbariums in the area and to health food stores who are beginning to purchase directly from the root diggers.



**Wildfire
in the south.
There's no
future in it.**

In the South, woods arson destroys nearly half a billion trees a year. All because a guy gets mad at somebody, or mad at nobody. Does this kind of destruction make sense?

advertising contributed for the public good
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whiskey, ginseng has been consumed for hundreds of years by Asian people.

Now with the back-to-nature movement in America and the continued interest in health foods, ginseng is a great demand in this country. And the supply is dwindling.

Ask a mountain man if he is digging any ginseng these days, and he will either shake his head or look at you as if you are trying to ferret out the secret of his private digging grounds.

It still is being dug, of course. Wilcox Drug Company of Boone, North Carolina, one of the larger herbariums in southern Appalachia, reports the purchase and sale of over two thousand pounds of dried ginseng root last year, most of it shipped abroad.

Gary Wilcox, one of the owners of the firm, says that the wild root is bringing the highest prices ever. "If you can buy it this season, it will cost you up to \$70 a pound--the cultivated will bring about \$20.

July through October is generally given as the digging season for ginseng, and for years root diggers have brought their harvest to general stores, warehouses and herbariums for sale or barter.

H.W. Mast, the owner of

Jim Shepherd, operator of The Green Revolution, a health food store in Boone, indicates that he will probably begin handling small amounts of both wild and cultivated ginseng this summer along with other mountain herbs: "I get calls almost every day for ginseng powder, capsules, or tea bags--occasionally the roots themselves." At the moment he handles only Korean ginseng, which brings five to seven dollars an ounce.

Most wild roots brought in for sale today are comparatively small, a root weighing half an ounce being considered a good size. Roots measuring up to twenty-one inches in length, however, have occasionally been reported in the past.

I would like to pursue the digging and sale of ginseng in a future column, so if you are a present or past digger of this root and other herbs, I would like very much to hear from you. I promise not to reveal the location of your diggings!

Please send responses to Rogers Whitener, Box 376, Boone, N.C. 28607.

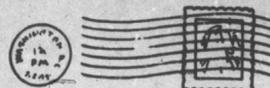


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Letter To The Editor



Dear Editor:

Opening week at the Yancey Theater was a tremendous success and we can only thank the people of this area who made it all possible by their wonderful response to the "new" theater and our family entertainment format.

We hope we can truly provide the people here with a family entertainment center and that in some small way it will repay the welcome we have received here not only as a new business but also as new residents of Yancey County.

We would especially like to offer sincere thanks to the many people who have been so kind and have gone out of their way to make us feel at home here.

Sincerely,
Ben and Carmela Mandala
and family.

Wildlife Afield

BY JIM DEAN

Before it's too late, maybe we ought to take a closer look at some of the water management projects planned for this state.

That was the basic suggestion outlined in a speech given by Clyde P. Patton, Executive Director of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, at the recent North Carolina Wildlife Federation annual meeting in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Patton pointed out the rapid loss of wildlife habitat and undeveloped land to various types of accelerating development such as dams, stream channelization and dredging--particularly huge impoundments.

"We have been losing this battle for years," said Patton. "Where an impoundment is involved, there has developed a little gambit whereby a few hundred acres of habitat are set aside for wildlife, while thousands of acres of all types of wildlife habitat are inundated. This is called mitigation, except that it doesn't work.

"You can't flood miles of river bottom and replace it with a few duck ponds and expect turkey, deer and quail to live on it. It's an unequal trade-off in which wildlife--all species of wildlife--will always lose."

Patton also pointed out that sometimes the mitigation is never actually accomplished by the builders of the project. "Take, for example, the mammoth New Hope project in Chatham and Durham counties," said Patton. "It will destroy thousands of acres of prime habitat, and in return, we will get a thousand acres of waterfowl subimpoundments that will be cut by new Interstate Highway 40, a connector road to Highway 54 and a 70-foot power company easement. At one time, a golf course was planned in one of the duck ponds, and a new waste treatment plant has been built in another."

Patton told the Wildlife Federation that the Falls of the Neuse project north of Raleigh was causing similar problems.

"Before the first foot of land has been purchased for the project, there is a plan to relocate N. C. Highway 98 and chop 77 acres out of another waterfowl impoundment," said Patton. "The Wildlife Commission is supposed to get 860 acres for waterfowl subimpoundments and several thousands more acres for wildlife management in the Falls of the Neuse project.

"Sounds good, but there's a catch," continued Patton. "Those several thousand acres are lake perimeter and often nothing more than a buffer zone between the hamburger stands and the water skiers.

"In return, the Falls of the Neuse project will destroy 55,000 acres of excellent wildlife habitat, and this doesn't include the 8,500 acre Wilson Mills project which, when completed, will back water almost to the foot of the Falls.

"Taken individually," Patton said, "these projects do not seem too unreasonable, but when you put them all down on a map, it really becomes frightening. There are 20 reservoirs planned within a 50-mile radius of Raleigh, and this doesn't include the massive New Hope project. When you look at the total impact of these projects, you see hundreds of thousands of acres of wildlife habitat being destroyed. What happens when you flood deer and turkey out of the river bottoms? Where do they go? Into the next watershed? It too may be flooded by another project."

Patton called for a closer look at the total impact of such projects and their possible alternatives before it is too late. "The sportsmen of this state have always been the first to recognize the forces at work in our state and country that are detrimental, not only to hunting and fishing, but the entire environment," said Patton. "Now, the time has come for sportsmen and professional conservationists to join forces with non-hunting, non-fishing, but environmentally-oriented groups in a common cause.

"Tomorrow we may have reached the point of no return."

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