



A company in Wisconsin and Minnesota that was convicted of buying and selling illegally harvested wild ginseng has agreed to pay \$100,000 and accept a two-year ban on transactions involving the gnarled root. Wiebke Produce Inc., which is also known as the Wiebke Fur & Trading Company, has stores in La Crosse and Eitzen, Minn. The company pleaded guilty in August to violating an anti-poaching law.

During a plea hearing Thursday, company official Thomas Wiebke acknowledged that the company repeatedly bought wild ginseng that was harvested in Wisconsin without a license. The company said Friday it planned to provide a statement responding to the plea hearing.

Ginseng is prized in China, Korea and other Asian countries. Consumers say the bitter root eases stress, fatigue and insomnia