

The Effects of Poaching on the Sustainability of Two Southern Appalachian Plants

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Abstract

Galax (*Galax urecolata*) and Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolia*) are both common plants of the Southern Appalachian region. *Galax urecolata* is known for its beautiful round leaves and is used widely in the floral industry. *Panax quinquefolia*, on the other hand, is known more for its use in the medical field. Although these species serve different purposes, both share the same problem: poaching. Dramatic loss of these species has resulted in limited permits, due to the fact that there are not enough plants to harvest yearly anymore as a result of poaching. Collecting either galax or ginseng on National Park lands, or protected areas on the Blue Ridge Parkway, is illegal, but permits have been issued by these major U.S Forest Service Ranger Districts in western North Carolina: Appalachian, Grandfather, Pisgah, and Highlands. Laws have been made to protect these plants. Special protocols such as plant dyes, tagging, and marking, enforced by the National Park Service, USDA, and the NCDA, have aided in the catching of poachers. Plants are marked with certain microtaggents, and when taken from a certain area of land, the plants can be traced back to their original location, and poachers will be punished. Poaching is a major problem for many plant species, and if this problem persists, then certain species of plants may be lost forever.