GINSENG GERMINATION AND SURVIVAL TEST PLOTS: A SUGGESTED PROTOCOL FOR EVALUATING "WILD SIMULATED" GINSENG INTRODUCTIONS

Prepared by Bob Beyfuss*, Cornell Cooperative Extension Ginseng Specialist. Edited for use in Wisconsin by Tony Johnson. Any questions, comments or suggestions regarding the content of this text should be directed to Tony Johnson (anthony.johnson@wisc.edu)*

If the site appears to be suitable, measure and mark 10 foot wide by 10 foot long test plots using survey flags. Survey flags are available from farm and home stores, or forestry suppliers. Set up as many 10 foot square plots as you desire.

- Weigh stratified seeds into 1 oz. quantities and package in small plastic baggies (there are approximately 500 seeds per ounce)

- Rake back the leaves from each plot and scratch the soil surface with a 3 tined tool, garden rake, or similar light tillage implement. Remove rocks or roots that would prevent the seeds from contacting the soil.

- Scatter 1 oz of seeds evenly over each 10 foot by 10 foot test plot and walk on them to insure good soil contact (5 seeds per square foot). The best time to plant in Wisconsin is mid to late October.

    - *If available, also plant at least one 3 year old transplant rootlet in the center of each test plot. Seed dealers often sell transplantable rootlets in addition to seeds. Viable three year old plants are much more likely to tolerate some slug predation and will help to evaluate the site for future expansion of additional transplants.*

- Rake leaves back over each plot. Leave survey flags in place over the winter! Number or code each test plot by writing a number or code letter on the survey flag. Record all data on tracking sheet.

Begin inspecting plots as soon as the snow melts the following spring.

- Position slug traps, one at each plot, to survey slug populations. An inexpensive slug trap is made by filling a small, shallow saucer with beer.

Position the saucer at ground level so that slugs can easily crawl into the saucer and drown. Replace beer after rain.

- If you trap more than one slug per plot over a period of several weeks as the ginseng is germinating you will need to provide slug control by using poison baits. Beer traps are not effective as control agents but work well for survey purposes. Organic growers have several pesticide options available such as “Escargro” or “Sluggo” products. Conventional growers have even more options including poison baits made from metaldehyde (i.e. Deadline slug pellets). Read and follow all label directions when using any sort of pesticide, organic or conventional.

- Count number of emerged seedlings in May and continue to monitor them until fall. Record data on the tracking sheet.

- Determine which of the plots performed best and expand the plots in that immediate area. Abandon areas that have poor germination and or survivability. Within a few years you will have located the very best locations for serious expansion.

- Thin successful test plots after three years of growth to a density of one plant per square foot.