

\$3,000 fine for selling American ginseng

A Gilmour man has been fined \$3,000 for offences under the Endangered Species Act.

Josip Kusce pleaded guilty and was fined \$3,000 for selling live ginseng roots. Kusce also permanently forfeited to the Crown \$7,000 he received from the sale of the ginseng.

Court heard that on July 9, 2015, conservation officers from the Bancroft enforcement unit, with the ministry's Regional Ginseng Task Team and the Provincial Intelligence and Investigations Section, were conducting surveillance in the Gilmour area to identify individuals involved in the picking, selling and buying of American ginseng. Kusce was contacted by the officers and admitted to selling ginseng.

Justice of the Peace Ernie Parsons heard the case in the Ontario Court of Justice, Bancroft, on March 1, 2016.

Two other men charged as part of this investigation were previously convicted and fined a total of \$42,000 under the Endangered Species Act for trafficking in American ginseng.

American ginseng is a perennial herb that is highly valued by some for medicinal purposes. As a result of overharvesting and the destruction of ginseng habitat, it is listed as endangered in Ontario under the Endangered Species Act and cannot be taken from the wild, possessed, bought or sold.