



Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries  
Natural Heritage Program

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*Panax quinquefolius* L.  
**American Ginseng**

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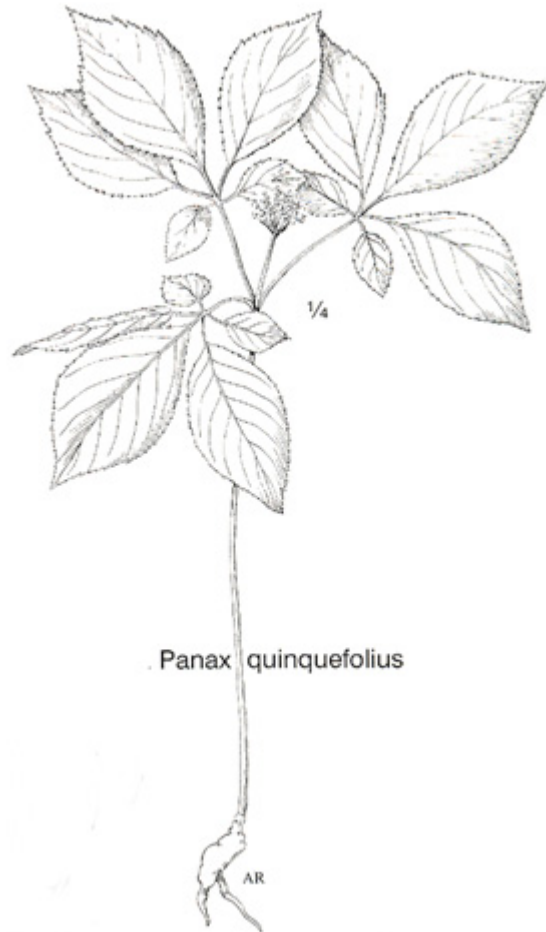


Photo by L. Urbatsch

**Identification:** Perennial herb. Root fusiform. Stem ranging from 0.5-4 dm (at most 6 dm) in height. Leaves in whorls, palmately compound and 1-5 in number. Leaflets 3-7 (but usually 5), the blades obovate, or those of the basal leaflets oval or suborbicular, acuminate, serrate, base oblique, and up to 15 cm long by 8 cm wide on long petiolules. Peduncle up to 25 cm long but probably shorter. Umbel terminal and simple. Sepals up to 0.2 mm long. Petals greenish-white. Ovary mostly 2 or 3-celled. Style distinct. Fruit 8-10 mm long, and bright red.

**Key ID characters:**

- Perennial herb with rather large roots, largest in the middle and tapered at the ends.
- Up to 4 dm tall.
- Leaves in whorls, palmately compound (leaflets usually 5 in number), serrate, 15 cm by 8 cm.
- Flowers in simple umbels.
- Petals greenish-white.
- Fruit bright red.



Panax quinquefolius

Illustration by Anne Rogelberg. Reprinted with permission from N.H. Holmgren, *The Illustrated Companion to Gleason and Cronquist's Manual: Illustrations of the Vascular Plants of Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada*, p. 343, Copyright 1998, The New York Botanical Garden.

**Habitat:** Cool places in rich woods.

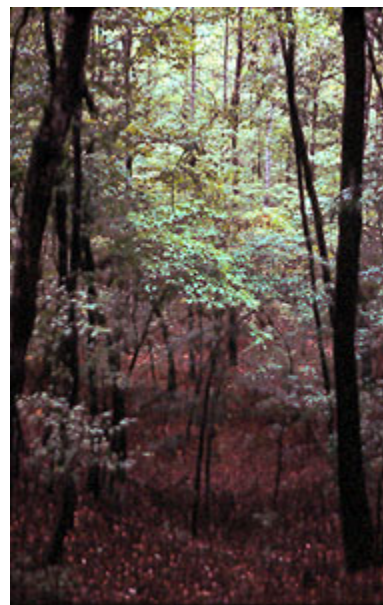
**Taxonomic Comments:** This species is a member of the family Araliaceae. There are only two other species within the family known to occur in LA: *Aralia spinosa* (Hercules' Club) and *Hedera helix* (English Ivy).

**Status:**

Wetland: No Data

Global: G3G4 - Vulnerable - Apparently Secure

State: S1 - Critically Imperiled



Southern Mesophytic Forest

**Range:** Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

**Soils:** alkaline loessial deposits.

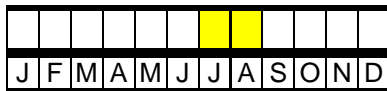
**Similar Species:** There are no closely related taxa present in LA that could be confused with *Panax quinquefolius*. However, because of the leaf complexity and because it may be quite short in height, *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* (Virginia Creeper) may be mistaken for it. It is however a vine, much more common throughout the state, and a member of the family Vitaceae.

**Reason for Rarity:** Habitat loss; occurring in Louisiana on fringes of its habitat range; collection by herbalists.

**Known Distribution in Louisiana:**  
West Feliciana

**Dates of Natural Heritage Program Observations:**  
1938, 1986

**Best Time for Viewing this Species:**



Distribution in Louisiana

#### References :

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Gleason, Henry A., and Arthur Cronquist. *Manual of Vascular Plants of Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada*. Bronx: New York Botanical Garden, 1991.

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