

Araliaceae (Ginseng family)

Photo by Bradley Simpson

By JIL SWEARINGEN

Have you ever seen American Ginseng, or 'sang', in the wild? Do you know how to tell the introduced and invasive Japanese Aralia from our native Devil's-Walking Stick? The Maryland Native Plant Society board has selected the Ginseng family for its 2025 family. The Araliaceae is a diverse group of mostly tropical plants with 1500-1900 species worldwide. Inflorescences are in umbels, as are those of the Apiaceae, the 2024 family of the year. We only have

16 members of Araliaceae in Maryland including 10 native, and 6 non-native, (all of which are invasive). The plants have alternate leaves, flowers in umbels, and many are aromatic. How many are you familiar with?

Ecological importance. The flowers are an important source of nectar for native bees, wasps, butterflies, and other pollinators, as well as the non-native European honey bee. The fruits are an important

food source for small mammals and migrating birds.

Economically important and State rare species. American Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) is a popular medicinal plant that is highly regulated to ensure its continued existence. It is a Species of Conservation Concern in Maryland with the designation 'S2S3 (State rare) Vulnerable'. Chinese Ginseng (*Panax ginseng*), a close relative native to China, is not found in Maryland.

REFERENCES

Maryland Biodiversity Project. marylandbiodiversity.com
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Wild American Ginseng: Information for Dealers and Exporters. fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/factsheet-american-ginseng-harvesters-dealers-exporters.pdf
Weakley, A.S., J.C. Ludwig, J.F. Townsend, and B. Crowder. 2024. *Flora of Virginia*. Botanical Research Institute of Texas Press. pp. 1899-1904.



Devil's-Walking Stick (*Aralia spinosa*) provides pollen, fruit, and cover for wildlife. Photo by Pru Foster.

Native Species

Common Name	Scientific Name	Distribution in MD
Bristly Sarsaparilla	<i>Aralia hispida</i>	Garrett Co.
Wild Sarsaparilla	<i>Aralia nudicaulis</i>	Throughout
American Spikenard	<i>Aralia racemosa</i>	Western shore to mtns
Devil's-Walking Stick	<i>Aralia spinosa</i>	Throughout
American Marsh Pennywort	<i>Hydrocotyle americana</i>	Throughout
Floating Marsh Pennywort	<i>Hydrocotyle ranunculoides</i>	Throughout
Many-flowered Marsh Pennywort	<i>Hydrocotyle umbellata</i>	Coastal Plain
Saltpond Marsh Pennywort	<i>Hydrocotyle verticillata</i>	Bay counties
Dwarf Ginseng	<i>Nanopanax trifolius</i>	Throughout
American Ginseng	<i>Panax quinquefolius</i>	Throughout

Non-native Invasive Species

Common Name	Scientific Name	Distribution in MD
Japanese Aralia	<i>Aralia elata</i>	Coastal Plain, Piedmont
Five-leaf Aralia	<i>Eleutherococcus sieboldianus</i>	Coastal Plain, Piedmont
English Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>	Throughout
English Ivy/Irish Ivy hybrid	<i>Hedera helix/hibernica</i>	Throughout
Lawn Marsh Pennywort	<i>Hydrocotyle sibthorpioides</i>	Coastal Plain, Piedmont
Prickly Castor Oil Tree	<i>Kalopanax septemlobus</i>	Coastal Plain, Piedmont