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Can Tropical Ginger Find a Home in Un-Tropical Maine?

In Farmington, Rustic Roots Farm prepares to harvest its Maine-grown ginger.



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By Amber Kapiloff

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The trick to growing ginger in Maine, Dave Allen says, is to convince the ginger that it's not in Maine at all. He and his partner, Erica Emery, own **Rustic Roots Farm**, in Farmington, and for the past several years, they've experimented with growing ginger outside the hot, wet climate the zesty root vegetable prefers. In early March, the couple gets rhizomes from an organic farm in Hawaii (the country's biggest ginger-producing state), then covers them in fibers from coconut husks and puts them in an incubator. When the plants begin to sprout, they're transferred to a toasty greenhouse. Last year, Allen and Emery received a grant from Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education to aid their ginger project, in hopes that their experience will be useful to other potential ginger farmers. By late September or early October, as cool weather sets in, this year's crop should be ready for harvest. Allen plans to mark the occasion with a drink: "Bringing in a hunk of fresh ginger and muddling it, or syrup-ing it, or infusing it . . . it's my favorite ingredient to make cocktails with."

In addition to ginger, Rustic Roots Farm grows beets, onions, carrots, and more, sold at the Farmington Farmers' Market, in downtown Farmington, on Friday mornings.