

Update

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Beacon Commodities



We are excited to report that our English Angelica has just been harvested after 15 months in the ground. This is another step forward to increasing the number of UK grown gin botanicals.



Being botanical-traders we source all manner of herbs, spices and roots from around the world bringing them into our UK warehouse. However, we have always had a burning ambition to try and grow more UK gin botanicals. We know our climate is not 'particularly favourable' but we do have access to UK farmers with exceptional skills and Ramsey Estates is no exception. It is this reason why we have grown English Angelica on a trial basis this year and as usual both Ramsey and ourselves have learnt, and have many more, lessons to learn!

To sum up – trial and error will be the key!



An angelica root going up the belt

The harvest

The Angelica was harvested on Tuesday 10th September by a potato harvester with front loaded topper. The harvested roots were then separated by hand behind the harvester. Once separated the remaining plant tops were cut off by hand and collected in a JCB for processing. The whole process is very labour intensive but ensured it could be completed in a day. It was also quite a departure from modern techniques of farming with so much mechanisation and technology these days.

Luckily (for Tommy) with lovely weather, there were many positive comments about being out of a tractor!



Harvested roots awaiting trimming and collection



A sunny day on the Fens



Dried seed in the foreground

Loss of plants

Unfortunately, in the two months leading up to harvest we lost a significant number of plants which resulted in a much lower yield than expected. We were caught on the 'back foot' with how quickly the plant went to seed and it appears that a large majority of the crop put their energies into growing seed and not into the root. This meant that after seeding the root never fully recovered and either died or was not worth harvesting.

This has raised many questions on how to handle the next crop which was planted in May 2019 – the list of options are endless and it is a case of working out what will suit the soil conditions and farming operations.



A hard day's work

Processing

The Angelica will now be left for a few weeks in chilled storage to allow the worst of the soil to fall off. It will then be washed to remove the remaining soil before being cut and dried. The drying will be using a heat source with the hope to dry it within 24-48 hours. The Angelica will then be transported back to our Warehouse for sieving/sizing and packaging.

This processing is just as important as the growing to ensure a quality crop and no doubt there will be many lessons to learn here! We are hoping that we will have the Angelica ready in around one month's time.

Now, with some greater confidence we can say that maybe Angelica will be a common sight on the Fens.

We would welcome your support and any advice or feedback you would be willing to offer for this project so please do not hesitate to contact Tommy or Michael.

