

# Jumping junipers, a love of gin turns to cash crop

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In the heart of dairy country, a husband and wife team are hoping to establish a commercial juniper crop.

Taranaki's Jo and Dave James produce and market boutique London-style gin Juno through their company, BeGin Distilling.

The couple use Taranaki mountain water as the base for their product and source almost all of their botanicals - the plants used to flavour the alcohol - locally.

"Our orris root comes from Hawke's Bay, coriander seed from the Wairarapa," Dave said.

"A citrus orchard is being established here in Taranaki and we work with a limery on the East Coast."

Kaffir lime leaves, green cardamom, angelica root, manuka and cassia bark also feature and for seasonal variants, the couple use "what is fresh and plentiful, the fruits and leaves that have flourished through the season".

They are now in talks with



Taranaki gin maker Jo James.

horticulturists and iwi to grow juniper, the key ingredient in any gin, as a commercial crop.

"We're applying for funding now to do the first crop trials," Jo said.

As a former conservation consultant, Dave was excited by the idea of introducing a new envi-

ronmentally sustainable crop to New Zealand's horticultural landscape.

"Sustainability is one of our core values. We use rainwater from our roof for cooling processes, we use extremely efficient heating techniques and we've developed a capacity to reuse our

botanicals rather than discard them," he said.

"For example, our juniper is sent to a local chocolatier to be used in making chocolate truffles."

Two years ago the couple, who met at primary school in New Plymouth, left their careers and combined their science backgrounds and passion for gin to start dreaming and experimenting to craft their ideal gin.

"I love gin. It's been a favourite drink of mine since I was a teenager and I've always loved to cook," Jo said.

"So what we're doing with Juno is like a recipe for happiness - we're able to play with flavour and create a product that I genuinely love."

Today their 400 litre still can produce 450 700ml bottles of gin per day and the Jameses hoped it would soon be working at full capacity.