

# ROLLING PRAIRIE

*notes from rolling prairie farmers alliance*

WEEK OF AUGUST 16  
2009

## Coming Up

### Organic vs. Sustainable?



What is the difference between “organic” and “sustainable” farming? There is no simple answer.

Legally, since 1990, anyone selling more than \$5000 worth of produce in a year needs to be certified, meaning they have been inspected and shown that they have adhered to a set of rules established under the USDA National Organic Program if they want to label it “organic.”

Some people argue that “sustainability” describes a spectrum of practices, with hard core chemical agriculture at the “least sustainable” and organic at the “most sustainable” ends. In between are reduced and more carefully managed mixtures of chemical and organic practices, such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

Others argue that some organic practices, such as substituting tillage for weed control, are less sustainable because they can damage the soil and lead to increased soil loss. The fact is, though, that organic farmers are primarily committed to building and preserving soil and soil fertility, and adjust their tillage practices accordingly.



MICHAEL POLLAN :  
IN DEFENSE OF FOOD

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

EAT FOOD \* NOT TOO MUCH \* MOSTLY PLANTS

## SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION

In our last issue (before the newsletter took a one-week hiatus) we noted the successful summer that students in the JCCC Sustainable Ag Practicum have had delivering produce to Rolling Prairie members, especially at the JCCC site. We plan to build on that success this academic year with a whole new crop of students.

In July, I attended a Sustainable Agriculture Education conference in Ames, Iowa. This was the third year for that conference, and the youth of the organization is an indication not only that sustainability is a relatively new concern in agriculture education, but also that it has finally established a foothold.

Most of the participants were from land grant ag schools. The majority were involved in the “hard” sciences, but a good number were social scientists focussing on sustainable food systems.

JCCC wasn't the only community college represented. A community college in Marshalltown, Iowa has a similar program, with the additional feature of providing a program for training immigrants to be market farmers, and providing them a bit of land on which to get started.

I look forward to “growing” the JCCC program in similar ways.



# More on the GPLOF exchange

**A**s a former farmhand and Executive Director of the Kansas City Center for Urban Agriculture (KCCUA), Katherine Kelly has seen the benefits of gardening for both individual health and community well-being. In a June interview with Stephanie Barrows, she elaborated on this mission with observations from the recent Global Partners for Local and Organic Food tour in Ogawa-machi, in Saitama, Japan.

**Citizens of Ogawa-machi** and Kansas City share a growing concern with the quality and accessibility of local food sources. Yet, differences in the urban landscapes have shaped people's awareness of these issues. For starters, gardening and farming [in Ogawa] are [integrated] with human habitation in people's daily lives. Kelly says that kids

walking to school can see rice paddies, wheat fields...and "that's not the reality here." She continues, saying, "In most of the US, you could basically live most of your life without seeing how food is produced, every day. It made me realize how much work we have to do here, to create, or re-create, that reality."

**According to Kelly**, many Kansas City residents remember a proliferation of urban gardens during the 1940s and '50s. This may have come out of concern for the safety of local food supplies. Yet, awareness and hands-on contact with gardens have both shrunk in the past fifty or sixty years.

Another advantage for local growers and consumers in Japan has come from federal supports. Property tax rates for agricultural land are much lower than

residential rates, and there seems to be a commitment to preserving agricultural land for production. Kelly aims to examine these laws and their outcomes to see how they could be applied to Kansas City.

There are connections between lifestyle and health in Japan and the U.S. In Japan, the populace is generally healthy, with an approximate obesity rate of three percent. Diet and daily exercise play a major part in Japan's distinction of having some of the longest-lived citizens in the world.

Compare this to the United States, where the obesity rate is over 25% in thirty-two states ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)). In closing, Kelly states that "it's heartbreaking and maddening [American kids] are going to live shorter lives from diet-related diseases. So, I'm more fired up about working on healthy food."

Marjorie Cole sends along this recipe from *The Joy of Cooking* (2006).



**"It's an unusual, curiously-satisfying, easy-to-make purslane soup."**

Marjorie Cole  
Lawrence subscriber

## CREAM OF PURSLANE SOUP

Combine and bring to a boil:

**5 cups light stock or broth**  
**3 tablespoons brown or white rice**  
**2 teaspoons minced peeled fresh ginger**

Simmer until rice is tender, about 35 minutes. Stir in:

**1 medium bunch purslane (about 7 oz) chopped, stems and all**  
**1/2 cup hot heavy cream, half-and-half, or milk**  
**1 tablespoon chopped parsley**

Simmer the soup about 5 minutes; do not boil. Stir a small quantity of the soup into:

**2 eggs, well beaten**

Add this to the rest of the soup, stirring it in slowly. Heat the soup about 5 minutes; do not boil. Serve at once. (Makes about 6 cups.)