

# ROLLING PRAIRIE

*notes from rolling prairie farmers alliance*



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

EAT FOOD \* NOT TOO MUCH  
\* MOSTLY PLANTS \*

\* MICHAEL POLLAN, IN  
DEFENSE OF FOOD

WEEK OF  
JUNE 14, 2009

## Coming Up



### Late June

#### In Late June, we usually have:

beets, berries, bok choy, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, Chinese cabbage, cucumbers, garlic, green onions, greens, herbs, lettuce, mushrooms, onions, peas (snow, snap, and shelling), potatoes, radishes, raspberries, rhubarb, salad mix, summer squash, strawberries, and turnips.

### Share

We'd still like to share members' favorite recipes!

If you have favorite recipes you'd like to share, please send them to [sandheron@rollingprairie.net](mailto:sandheron@rollingprairie.net). We'll share them through the newsletter and add them to the anemic recipes page on our website.

### Timely rain?

As I finish this newsletter this morning's deluge has just moved on to the East. The inch or so we got last week was particularly timely, as the soil was beginning to get dry after a couple of weeks with minimal precipitation. It had been necessary to water a few of the baby plants, and the strawberries were smaller because they didn't have quite enough moisture for their shallow roots. Last year about this time we were wading in the mud, hoping for some drying time. Too much or too little, rain is one of the volatile conditions that adds to the risk of farming. Sadly, climate change is increasing that volatility.



## KNOW YOUR FARMERS: TOM BULLER

**Editor's note:** We continue our series of interviews of Rolling Prairie farmers by Stephanie Barrows. This week's subject is Tom Buller, newest grower to join the group full time.

Organic-style farmer and official transporter of Rolling Prairie produce in Kansas City, Tom Buller found time to talk about farming and his new position at the Lawrence Farmers' Market.

### Beginnings (November 09)

SB: Tell me about your farm, how you acquired it, and your relationship with Wakarusa Valley Farm and the other farmers.

TB: I guess I technically have a farm. I rent some land outside of Lawrence, and that's about the sum total of my farm....

[Through] the Growing Growers program...I met a number of local farmers, one of those being Mark Lumpe, who has Wakarusa Valley Farm. And, so I spent that first year here working for

him and for another farmer. [Jill Elmers of Moon-on-the-Meadow Farm, in Lawrence, Kansas.]

After that, I found some land I could lease out there...and I've been growing my own vegetables since then....

SB: What made you interested in farming?

TB: I don't know why I'm interested in farming, in general. Both of my parents grew up on farms, and they hated it.... Maybe it's my rebellion against them.

I've always been interested in farming; I have some uncles that still do it, and I always enjoyed spending time out there. They farm very differently than I do.

SB: Really?

TB: Yeah....

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online.]

# Know your farmers: Tom Buller (continued)

SB: What do your parents think of your farming?

TB: They haven't told me. (laughs) They're both very supportive of what I do, but I wouldn't say they've been overly supportive of this....

SB: What's your background, then? You came here and you did Growing Growers....

TB: What did I do, prior to that? I was a graduate student... [in] geography... [I studied] American agriculture... [and] all my questions were more about...how would one go about doing this? ....

That's pretty much all I've done. I was pretty much consistently in school my whole life, until I decided to drop out and become a vegetable farmer.

....

## ***“Organic-style agriculture”***

SB: You don't use chemicals?

TB: I use chemicals, but no synthetic chemicals.

SB: Explain that.

TB: Well, basically, to be an organic farmer, there are certain things you can use, and certain things you can't use. There's a list....

Organic doesn't mean you don't do anything, or use any amendments of any kind. It just means they have to be naturally based, and that has to be approved by certain regulatory agencies.... There are a bunch of considerations around about how to approve things – how long they stay in the environment....

[Organic pesticides] aren't that toxic, but they aren't that effective, either. You use them for the slightest bit of advantage; they aren't something to rely on.



## ***What's new? (May 09)***

SB: So, let's start with your family. What has changed?

TB: Since I last talked with you, I've had a baby.... He was born in November, which made the end of the season kind of interesting, and hard to get anything done.

SB: Are you still working at the bike shop?

TB: No, I'm not. Now, I'm the coordinator for the Downtown Farmers' Market.

SB: So, what's that job entail? What do you do?

TB: Well, I do lots of different things. I run around, meet with different people, talk to them about events at the Farmers' Market. I was actually talking to Hilary Brown, here at Local Burger, about an upcoming event... I [also] have to go and set up the market, which is on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday....



SB: Are you still doing the Rolling Prairie website?

TB: Yes, I'm supposed to be doing the website. I've been trying to [catch up] on that.... When my son was born, I checked out for several months....

SB: So, how do you stay disciplined enough to do all these things?

TB: You don't really have a choice, on the parenting part. That doesn't involve much discipline, I don't think. The other parts, I don't know. You have to make ends meet....

I just try my best to get things done when they need to be done. I'm perpetually behind with everything. I guess that's one thing [about] being the Market Coordinator and a farmer; there's always more work to do than you have time to do....

SB: You just try to roll with it.

TB: Yeah.