**Rodgers’ Prairie**  
Tim and Sue Rodgers – Louisburg, Kansas

**About the Owners**  
Susan is a Marais des Cygnes Extension Master Gardener, just retired from her nursing career. Tim owns Nova R Wealth, a financial services company. After purchasing the land in Louisburg, a conversation with a client spurred Tim’s interest in creating a prairie.

**About the Prairie**  
Fire is an integral aspect of the prairie ecosystem so before planting, the land was prepared with a spring burn. Invasives such as Johnson Grass and Sericea Lespedeza were aggressively treated with glyphosate herbicide. A limited plant palette of 12 species of forbs (flowers) and 4 native grasses were planted by drilling. These specific plants were chosen for their ubiquitous presence in tall grass prairies and their inspiring colors and textures. They all bloom at different times from late May through late September. Patience is required to restore a prairie since it took three years post-burn for the prairies to evolve from a looking like a weedy mess to the beauty of a prairie ecosystem. The emergence of long-dormant prairie seeds has speeded up the regeneration process and greatly increased diversity beyond the originally planted 16 species of plants.

**Special Features**  
✦ Magnificent native Green Ash Trees
✦ A large pond behind the house forms an important water source for wildlife and may be reached by gravel path
✦ A grass border is maintained around the 3 prairie fields as a buffer against invading weeds. Mowed paths are maintained for access
✦ A UTV is available to transport guests from the house and parking area out to the prairies.
✦ Photographs of the key plant species at various seasons are posted in the prairie. Representatives from the Miami County Conservation Department will be stationed in the prairie to assist visitors with identification.

**The Initial Planting**

**Grasses**
- Big and Little Blue Stem
- Switch Grass
- Indian Grass

**Forbs**
- Rattlesnake Master
- Grey-headed Coneflower (Ratibida)
- Purple Coneflower (Echinacea)
- Compass Plant
- Beebalm
- Tall coreopsis
- Goldenrod

**Greatest Challenges**
Seeds from invasive ornamental and naturalized plants constantly blow in from nearby yards and agricultural properties. They require constant vigilance and eradication. Maintenance requires controlled annual prairie burns: 1/3rd of the prairie is burned each year to suppress invasion by woody plants and allow germination of fire-sensitive native seeds.
Over the years, people have associated nature and more. Children who spend caterpillars, can capture a child's imagination. In our culture today, young people don't spend much For Future Generations showed the higher a neighborhood's tree density, the lower the incidence of heart and metabolic disease.

For Wildlife and Food Supply
Native plants are foundational in ecosystems. Through photosynthesis, they convert energy from the sun into forms that are usable for all other living things. Native plants provide nectar, shelter, and sustenance for butterflies, pollinators, and birds. You are probably familiar with the iconic Monarch butterfly, whose caterpillars can only eat milkweeds. This relationship is not unique in the insect kingdom. Over millennia, native insects and butterflies have co-evolved with the plants that provide for them. Many species eat and reproduce only on specific plants – native plants. Caterpillars and other insects not only provide the next generation of butterflies and beetles, they are the perfect food to grow the next generation of birds! Most birds feed their young insects, and caterpillars are a critical source of protein. It takes 6,000 to 9,000 caterpillars to raise a single nest of black capped chickadees! Pollinators also depend on native plants for nectar and sustenance, and we humans depend on pollinators – one out of every three bites of food we eat is the result of insect pollination! Despite all this, most residents, parks, and businesses rely mainly on non-native species, which do not provide much if any wildlife benefit.

For Flood Mitigation, Clean Water and Air
Native Plants manage water flow with their strong root networks. Their deep roots slow down the flow of water, preventing soil erosion and reducing stormwater runoff. Once established, native plants thrive without the use of irrigation, but they’re also regenerative. Native plants and rain gardens help clean water naturally because their deep root systems act as filters for the dirty runoff from streets, parking lots and rooftops. Native plants take carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, and their deep roots put it back in the ground (where it belongs!) in a process called carbon sequestration (also called carbon capture or carbon trapping). As plants respire, they absorb carbon dioxide from the air and release oxygen back into it. The carbon dioxide is broken down by plants, depositing carbon into the soil and releasing oxygen into the air. This carbon cycle creates oxygen for us to breathe, but it also puts carbon where it belongs – back into the soil!

For Human Mental and Physical Health
Over and over, studies show that time spent with nature helps us decompress, lowers our stress levels, makes us happier and healthier. Native plants "bring nature home" along with all of its wellness benefits. Native plants promote higher levels of creativity “… a 50 percent improvement in creativity after just a few days in nature.” Native plants aid in crime reduction. Buildings in Chicago with the most green views saw 48 percent fewer property crimes and 56 percent fewer violent crimes.” Native plants promote better mental health “The good news for city dwellers is that just fifteen to forty-five minutes in a city park, even one with pavement, crowds and some street noise, were enough to improve mood, vitality and feelings of restoration.” Native plants create improvements to human physical health. A recent study in Toronto showed the higher a neighborhood’s tree density, the lower the incidence of heart and metabolic disease.

For Future Generations
In our culture today, young people don’t spend much time in nature. Native plants, teeming with butterflies and caterpillars, can capture a child’s imagination and provide them with opportunities for inquiry, discovery, creativity, and more. Children who spend time in and feel connected to nature tend to become adults who are more inclined to care about the natural world.

For Beauty
Over the years, people have associated native plants with native prairies and other beautiful, rugged, untamed places. Native landscapes at home don’t have to look wild and wooly unless you want them to. With good design and maintenance, native plants can also thrive in traditional gardenscapes.