



For Sadhu Aufuchs Johnston and wife Manda Aufuchs Gillespie, shown in their Rogers Park condo with 3-month-old daughter Zella Rose, being eco-conscious is not a fad, it's their lifestyle. The two exercise extreme consciousness in the routines of daily living. Tribune photos by Bill Hogan

The eco-centrics

They recycle their toothbrushes, share bath water and had a non-shower for their baby. Meet Chicago's First Family of Green.



LIVING THE GREEN LIFE

By Karen Klages
Tribune staff reporter

Except for the nebulizer (a tabletop appliance resembling a small flying saucer) sending a mist of geranium essential oil over the living room and a toilet in one of the bathrooms that has an odd little sink popping out of its tank, nothing screams at you that there's something different about this house. Likewise for its occupants — a couple of up-

wardly mobile thirtysomethings, Sadhu Aufuchs Johnston and his wife, Manda Aufuchs Gillespie, and their 3-month-old daughter, Zella Rose. Add two dogs and thousands of worms in the basement (we will explain later), and you have Chicago's First Family of Eco Consciousness.

Johnston is commissioner of the Department of Environment for the City of Chicago. He also is one of those uncommon public officials who walks the talk.

At work, Johnston oversees a staff of about 100 — and Mayor Richard Daley's vision for turning Big Shoulders into the greenest city in the U.S.,

a city flowing with green roofs, green buildings, green businesses, rain barrels, composting bins, ex-offenders planting community gardens and a citywide recycling program that isn't tragically flawed, among other programs.

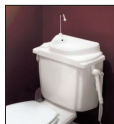
At home, Johnston implements his personal green agenda. He and Manda, his eco soulmate whom he met at Oberlin College in Ohio 10 years ago, live a green life that is radical in both its breadth and simplicity.

"People have this perception that you've got to buy a hybrid car and build a solar system on PLEASE SEE FAMILY, PAGE 6

Greenskeeping: For Sadhu Aufuchs Johnston and his wife Manda Aufuchs Gillespie, living the green life is more about lifestyle choices than fancy eco equipment. Have a look at three of their green habits.



◀ **CUTTING CORNERS**
Instead of using paper towels, Johnston/Gillespie implement a kitchen system that recycles sponges with fresh ones used for dishes, then counters, then floors. Corners are cut to help ID them.



◀ **TAP ON TANK**
Johnston installed this low-tech gray-water system himself. The sink — built into the back end of the toilet is a tap to incoming clean water, which then goes into the toilet bowl.



◀ **WORKING WORMS**
In the basement of their building, a worm bin where they compost their organic trash year-round. Once a week, Johnston empties the contents of their kitchen countertop composter into the bin and lets the worms do their thing.



Beth Botts

Plant, weed, water, blog . . . blog!

By Beth Botts
Tribune staff reporter

Step right in to our garden. Our garden blog, that is: The Chicago Gardener.

You'll find it at www.chicagotribune.com/chicagogardener and we hope you'll visit often.

Main blogger: Me (although the rest of the Home&Garden staff may chime in). I think of myself as a pretty down-to-earth type, and my goal for this blog is for it to be as practical and useful as possible to Chicago gardeners.

BLOG ON

From our Glorious Gardens Contest '99, a fellow blogger bloomed. PAGE 10

And I'm depending on all of you other gardeners around here to help me do it, with your comments, advice, tips, agreement or disagreement. (We all know there is plenty of room for disagreement about gardening.)

We've started this blog because we felt there was a need for a place for Chicago gardeners to gather and exchange their ideas and accumulated knowledge about what works in our climate and where we do our thing: city, suburbs, rooftops, clay soil, sandy soil, potting soil.

As far as I'm concerned, you're a gardener if you have a houseplant, or a balcony with (so far) two pots, or a front yard in Chatham or 10 acres in Lake Forest, or if you only dream of gardening or are figuring out how to get started.

My garden? Well, it runs along the north side of a four-story apartment building, which means mostly shade. Hostas (how'd you guess?), wildflowers, crocus, scilla, daffodils, celandine poppies, monkshood, columbine, ferns, hardy geraniums, corydalis, spiderwort, coral bells, brunnera, wild ginger, way too much English ivy and some ratty yews and honeysuckles I'm hoping to replace one day.

You may have a very different garden. But we hope you'll join the conversation at **The Chicago Gardener**. ebotts@tribune.com

IN THE WEB EDITION
Got a gardening question?
Ask Beth at www.chicagotribune.com/chicagogardener

INSIDE



CLOCHE CALL

6 lovely stages for your plants.

HELLO, GOOD BUYS, PAGE 4

WARES IN THE WORLD

A sneak peek at interesting introductions from the International Home & Housewares Show.

PAGE 3