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The green season rolls in

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Once a year, we commit ourselves to the ritual known as spring-cleaning. While traditionally we think of this as a time to clean our homes, it's an equally apt time to cleanse ourselves, and the planet, of nasty toxins and to initiate greener ways of living.

Buying eco-friendly wares -- from organic cotton miniskirts to recycled glass carafes -- is one easy way to start.

Here are 12 sustainable items we fancy.

Start 'em early

Between its reasonable prices and modern aesthetic, **Grow** makes it hard not to buy natural and organic wares for your baby. Among the colorful array of prints and patterns, we covet Kate Quinn's organic cotton onesie, which snaps closed like a kimono (\$18), and sleep saque, a potato sack-style, long-sleeve nightie with hand mitts to prevent scratching and give easy diaper-changing access. The store also sells waterproof, natural and organic mattresses by NaturePedic (\$220-\$260). Grow, 1943 W. Division (773-489-0009); grow-kids.com.

Sip the light biodynamic

Here's a phrase worth adding to your wine vocabulary: biodynamic. Combining century-old agricultural techniques with organic and sustainable practices (and a few folkloric rituals to boot), biodynamic wines lack the official organic stamp of approval, but **Provenance Food & Wine** considers these bottles eco-friendly nonetheless. Among the selection at Provenance, check out two bottles from France: a 2002 Chinon from the Lambert vineyard (\$16) and a 2004 Gewurzraminer from Martin Schaezel's vineyard in the Alsace region (\$19). Provenance Food and Wine, 2528 N. California (773-384-0699); provenancefoodandwine.com.

Step gently on the earth

At least a half-dozen of the local designers' wares at Wolfbait & B-Girls incorporate reused or recycled elements, but we're especially keen on the Mohop sandals. Handmade by Annie Mohaupt, the sandals are composed of Finnish birch plywood and recycled rubber soling, with graphics screen-printed on the instep. Sold with interchangeable ribbon laces, these kicks will go with just about anything (weather permitting), embracing the concept of bang for your buck. \$175. Wolfbait & B-Girls, 3131 W. Logan (312-698-8685); wolfbaitchicago.com.

Green jeans -- yes!

It's nice to know that among the dozens of skinny leg denims on the market, at least a few are organic. Fresh-from-the-farm Loomstate denims at the West Loop's **Koros** come in a handful of styles, so you don't have to sacrifice the stove-pipe leg or tapered ankle looks while steering clear of the pesticides. Pair your pants with an organic cotton blazer or silk blouse by Edun. \$150-\$180 for denims; \$160-\$345 Edun apparel. Koros, 1019 W. Lake (312-738-0155); korosartandstyle.com.

The simple life

Always on the cutting edge of design, **Hej fina** sprinkles its clothing collection with one of the finest organic lines circulating in the States. A stitchless white miniskirt and a blue-and-cream-striped wrap dress perfect for a summer day in Paris exemplify Rogan's simple style. In addition, the front section of the shop is dedicated to showcasing modernist wood furniture; among them, Atlantico waves the sustainable flag, using scrap wood to create sleek designs for outfitting your home. Hej fina, 1529 N. Milwaukee (773-772-0002); hej fina.com.

Soy goes soft

There's more to soy than tofu and edamame. Canadian-based Lululemon's line Oqoqo offers solid color shirts made from soyla, a stretchy soy-based material so soft that the company describes it as "the cashmere of vegetable-based fabrics." Long-sleeve wraps, cap-sleeve boat-neck tees, and reversible skirts that double as dresses are richly saturated in colors such as lavender, army green and basic black. \$44-\$88. Lululemon, 2108 N. Halsted (773-883-8860).

Everything old is new again

Sure, old wine bottles make quaint decorative pieces on your fireplace mantel, but if you're looking to step it up a notch designwise, **I.D.'s** transSglass pieces, designed by Tord Boontje and Emma Woffenden, provide a palatable alternative. From vases to lidded carafes to tumblers, the organically shaped glassware is made from recycled wine and beer bottles and comes, of course, in the bottles' original colors -- brown, green or clear. Local artisans in Guatemala produce each piece by hand. \$45-\$75 per item. I.D. Chicago, 3337 N. Halsted (773-755-4343).

Bags of power

We've heard of solar-powered pool covers, but solar power bags? The locally made Noon Solar messenger-style bags on sale at **Robin Richman** are not only 100 percent sustainable, but they'll also power your iPod or cell phone as you traipse across town. (Next up, the company is working on laptop chargers.) The naturally tanned, biodegradable, chrome-free leather bags come in dark brown, red and caramel, and a coat of beeswax weatherproofs this carrier for Chicago winters. \$550. Robin Richman, 2108 N. Damen (773-278-6150).

Skin deep indeed

If Clean & Clear hasn't sold you, perhaps Arcona, a natural and organic skin-care line sold exclusively in the Chicago area at **Ruby Room**, will do the trick. Arcona's Basic Five kit -- two daily cleansers, an overnight solution, daily moisturizer and skin protectant -- boasts an extensive list of ingredients, including fruit extracts, red wine, black tea, oatmeal and glycolic and lactic acid. We'll slather our skin with the scent of orange peel any day. \$93 for travel-size, \$220 for full-size bottles. Ruby Room, 1743-45 W. Division (773-235-2323); rubyroom.com.

Sweet and clean

Walking into Wicker Park's **Tatine** feels like stepping into a French patisserie, but the goods on sale aren't exactly edible. Handmade by proprietor Margo Breznik, the soy candles come infused with sugary sweet (chocolate orange and creme brulee) and garden or forest scents (Asian white tea and sweet grass). Compared to traditional paraffin candles, these guys burn up to 50 percent longer and offer a cleaner, longer-lasting aroma. \$15-\$24. Tatine, 1742 W. Division (773-342-1890); tatinecandles.com.

Not down on paper

A specialty paper store isn't exactly the kind of business that the term "tree hugger" brings to mind, but Eco-Friendly Papers at **Paper Doll** defies conventional paper practices. Artisans in India produce the company's simple, leather-bound journals (made with leather from animals that died naturally) filled with cotton pages produced from recycled rags (\$18-\$20). Embroidered cotton wrapping paper also is available (\$5-\$8). Paper Doll, 2048 W. Division (773-227-6950); papeollchicago.com.

Big cheeses

The latest push among the eco-friendly set is all about buying local. Oak Park's **Marion Street Cheese Market** stocks about half of its store with cheese from sustainable and organic small family farms in the Midwest. Before your next cocktail party, stop in for Bleu Mont Dairy's white English-style Cheddar, a 2006 Best in Show award winner from the American Cheese Society (\$34.99), and Prairie Fruits Farm organic goat cheese (\$29.99 per pound). Marion Street Cheese Market, 101 N. Marion, Oak Park (708-848-2088); marionstreetcheesemarket.com.

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