COUPLE CREATES 'GREEN' LIFE

A pair lives 'green' life

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Tony Adrian and Marie Bossard live in an attractive 1,000-square-foot house on the outskirts of town. Their monthly electricity bill is zero. Their monthly water bill is zero.

All of the home's energy comes from solar panels situated in the side yard. All of the home's water comes from the sky, safely stored and filtered through a rainwater harvesting system.

Adrian explained that when he and his wife approached architect Eddie Cazayoux, they had three criteria. They wanted their home to be energy efficient, easy to clean and made of recycled materials when possible.

Cazayoux, of Breaux Bridge, is a University of Louisiana architecture professor. He went beyond the couple's expectations in his creation of a state-of-the-art home that utilizes technology of yesteryear.

“Part of what I do is sustainable design — you look at what you have locally and how can you use it,” Cazayoux said.

Cazayoux said that the two major concepts in the home's design were shading and ventilation.

“The wind comes from the south over the trees, comes over the house and creates a negative pressure to pull air through the house,” Adrian said.

Cazayoux refers to the negative pressure as “suck-ulation rather than just ventilation.”

Adrian and Bossard moved into the home in May; they said they survived their un-air-conditioned Louisiana summer just fine. Adrian challenges "any reasonable person to come at 4 on an August afternoon and say that it's not comforting."

Bossard said the home’s solar energy is actually more dependable than the public utility system that served their previous home in St. Martinville.

“We used to live in a house that had power outage. Now, we don’t,” Bossard said.

According to Adrian, the house, including the 342-square-foot downstairs utility and the wrap-around porch, which offers as much square footage as the home itself, cost about $175,000 to build.

The solar energy system cost about $16,000 and the rainwater 5,500-gallon system cost about $4,000.

“We are very, very picky about anything that uses electricity or water,” Bossard said, as she transferred wet clothes from washer to dryer.

The couple installed standard appliances in their home. All of the new appliances were purchased at Sears.

“I never thought I'd be talking up Sears, but they deserve the credit because of their commitment to selling and promoting low-energy usage appliances,” Adrian said.

Pointing to the pair of dishwashers in the couple's kitchen, Adrian said, "One of these costs the same as a good cabinet."

He explains that the two dishwashers only add to the home's efficiency — when one dishwasher is empty, the other is full, alleviating the need for cabinets and fitting the home's "easy to clean" criterion.

The only concession the couple has made in energy usage has been on the rare occasion of several consecutive days of shade.

“We get a week of shade, we don't wash clothes on the shady, shady days,”
The main living area of the Adrian-Bossard home was built using many recycled elements, including wooden floors milled from trees that fell during Hurricane Lili.

Adrian said.

To maintain the solar energy system, Adrian adjusts the solar panels twice a year and tops the batteries off with water once every two months. The home uses standard electrical plugs and light switches.

The rainwater harvesting system requires a little more maintenance, but Adrian said he believes the end product is well worth the effort.

"In a nutshell, rainwater properly done is multiple times cleaner than other water," Adrian said.

He explained that when harvesting rainwater, the first step is to keep the water going in clean. The system diverts water from the first 10 minutes of a rain "because the first five to 10 minutes of rain cleans the air."

Adrian stores their home's water in three tanks. He said that a four-inch rain provides enough water for four months. The home's roof serves as the rainwater harvest area; water is funneled through a series of three filters before it runs out of a faucet inside the home.

Reusable materials

Throughout the home, Adrian and Bossard point to other examples of their commitment to making the most of the environment and avoiding waste.

Take their wood floors, for example. The couple used their portable sawmill to salvage trees downed by Hurricane Lili. They are proud that no trees were cut to build their house.

The bricks came from a home being torn down in Crowley.

Someone upgrading a kitchen gave them the old oven hood. Their doors are old doors from UL buildings.

"We tried to recycle as much as we could without going nuts — and when given the opportunity, we bought locally," Bossard said.

Adrian and Bossard are proud of their home.

"It's an oasis," Bossard said.

The couple recognizes that their lifestyle isn't for everyone, but both agree that it works for them and that it's important to lead the way toward conserving available resources.

"The short answer is: we wouldn't go back," Adrian said.

For Bossard, a native of France, it's easy to see a global trend toward conservation, even if that's not always apparent in the United States.

"The rest of the world is changing," Bossard said.

Adrian said he realizes that few people will go to the lengths he and his wife did to conserve and reuse.

"You don't have to do what we did, but it's good to see a different way of life," Adrian said. "For us, we had to ask, 'How could we not afford to do this?"