



The Complete Guide to Alternative Home Building Materials & Methods: Including Sod, Compressed Earth, Plaster, Straw, Beer Cans, Bottles, Cordwood, and Many Other Low Cost Materials

By Jon Nunan

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In the United States alone, the annual construction of over one million new homes causes a very substantial drain on natural resources. Today, approximately 60 percent of the timber cut down in our country is used for building homes. Using alternative home building materials and creating a greener home are about creating better homes that are environmentally friendly, are less expensive in the long run, and create healthier occupants. Unfortunately, many people are unfamiliar with alternative building materials and do not know the first thing about going green. However, The Complete Guide to Alternative Home Building Materials & Methods will teach you everything you need to know about this movement toward natural construction methods.

This book will show you how to identify, locate, and effectively use alternative building materials. You will learn about straw bale, cordwood, cob, adobe, rammed earth, light clay, pisé, earthbag, bamboo, earth-rammed tires, cork, wool carpeting, sod, compressed earth, earth plaster, beer cans, bottles, as well as living roofs and more. In addition, you will learn the costs and performance characteristics of these materials and construction techniques for each, as well as how to integrate plumbing and electricity into these unfamiliar materials and substitutes for conventional approaches.

You will also learn about the structure, climate control, siting, foundations, and flooring options you gain when using these materials. Also included are the advantages and benefits of alternative building materials for both consumers and builders and the key ecological design principles. Ultimately, you will come to understand that these materials are cheaper, easier to build with, stronger, more durable, and more fire resistant.

Architects, designers, students, homeowners, home buyers, owner builders, and those who want to build for a sustainable future will want to read this book. If you are concerned about the environment, want to create a healthier, more enjoyable home, and want to save money, *The Complete Guide to Alternative Home Building Materials & Methods* will show you how.

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Editorial Review

Review

The mounting pressure on Earth's ecosystems through human activity is undeniable. In this era of global warming, peak oil, and declining biodiversity, it is clear we must find new ways to live so that future generations will also have accessible opportunities for a healthy life. However, our modern lifestyle is stifling our very chances for survival. As individuals, one of the areas where we have the most control over energy and resource use is in our homes. Whether building a new house or remodeling an existing one, we can make choices that will diminish our consumption of fossil fuels and lessen the emission of greenhouse gasses, while preserving precious water, forests, and other resources. The Complete Guide to Alternative Home Building Materials and Methods offers many options for building green and sustainable homes. The alternatives presented tend to reduce the use of energy-intensive industrial materials and promote energy-efficiency in your home over time. The best choice of exactly what to adopt for your own home building project depends on many factors, including local availability of materials, climate, cost, design, ease of construction, and personal aesthetics. While no book can describe everything you might need to know about every aspect of building, this book does a remarkable job of introducing the basics of alternative home building. It takes you through the step-by-step process of construction, from foundations and roofs to electrical installation and wall systems. Choices for heating, cooling, and insulating your home are also evaluated. The most common and some uncommon alternative methods of building are thoroughly examined. What is actually involved in building with cordwood, adobe, light straw-clay, rubber tires, straw bales, earthbags, cob, sod, rammed earth, compressed earth blocks, papercrete, recycled cans and bottles, and salvaged materials? By the time you have finished reading this book, you should have a pretty good idea of how to answer this question. There are many case studies interspersed throughout the text that amplify the themes presented and provide a personal and pertinent statement about how these ideas are implemented in the real world. Many resources for further study are outlined to help you down your path of creating a green future for yourself and others. Having gone down this path myself, I can attest to how extremely satisfying it is to actually live in a house that you had a hand in designing and building. And knowing that it is as sustainable as you can make it only adds to the satisfaction. Happy building! --Kelly Hart

About the Author

Jon Nunan is a writer for the home improvement industry, and staunch supporter of learning by doing and letting that which does not matter truly slide. When not writing, he can be found identifying wild mushrooms, picking berries, and taking on small projects in and around the wood pile he currently calls home."

Users Review

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