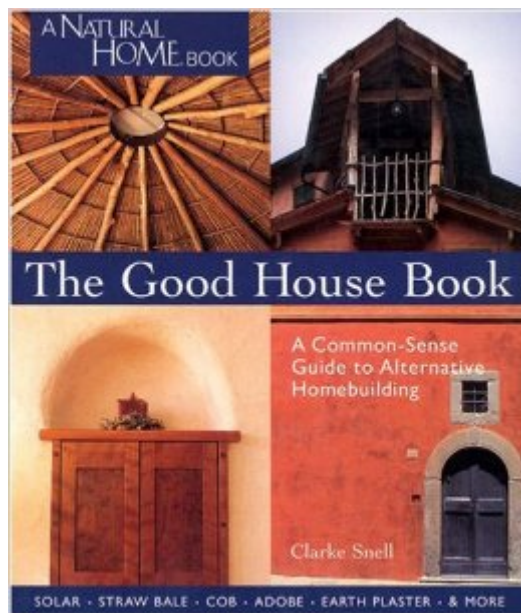


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# The Good House Book: A Common-Sense Guide To Alternative Homebuilding Solar \* Straw Bale \* Cob \* Adobe \* Earth Plaster \* & More (A Natural Home Book)



## Synopsis

From Lark Books and Natural Home magazine's, which has a circulation of 200,000, comes an illustrated, unique guide to building an earth-friendly home. To create a dwelling that's both ecologically sustainable and attractive, Natural Home magazine is the place to go. With this exquisitely illustrated guide, packed with 400 photos and illustrations, anyone can put environmentally friendly ideas into beautiful practice. Here's an intelligent look at how a home is supposed to function and a variety of different building approaches. What's important is finding the right solution to fit your individual needs, local climate, and natural resources. The broad range of topics covered include choosing a site; selecting materials; building with straw bale, cob, adobe, or rammed earth; and plugging into alternative home power systems. Interviews with six homeowners, and photos of the dream homes they built, provide invaluable insight.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (13 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

I've seen all of the other eco-house books (really!) after months of reading. This is the best I've seen. I could have missed the philosophy lesson in the first half easily, but the second half of the book more than made up for it. The author gives good detail on foundations, building types and solar gain, as well as other practical aspects to a green house. My favorite part of the book was the in-depth interviews and descriptions of alternative home builders and their houses. The answers to the question: "What was your greatest mistake?" was in every case eye-opening. This book goes far

beyond the usual "naive couple building a straw-bale" kind of book. Every useful kind of alternative construction is discussed from a builder's point of view. The photos are wonderful and appropriate. You might not want to live in their houses, but it gives you an idea of what has been done and why it worked and ways it could be improved.

The Good House Book is a loaded surprise: it is loaded full of the beauty of human efforts to create structures that keep us alive and comfortable on this planet; and a welcome surprise for the great depth to which it explores its subject of shelter. It is as attractively presented as a coffee table book, but covers a broad spectrum of building possibilities from general theory to specific applications, both historical and contemporary. An initial visual foray into the book reveals beautiful photographic illustrations throughout, often arranged in thought-provoking patterns of juxtaposition: traditional structures versus modern versus alternative. This is not a how-to, step-by-step book, but a book of ideas and underlying principles, supported by specific examples. In a chapter on Materials, we learn that ancient Roman concrete was pounded into place rather than poured wet, creating a material free of weak pockets, so strong that it did not rely on internal reinforcing, and allowing the creation of such enduring structures as the Coliseum in Rome. On a facing page concrete spews from a hose into a footing laced with reinforcing bar. This photo is annotated by a guest essay exploring modern concrete, which among other things explains why modern builders often pour it so wet (it flows easily into the forms and flows around the reinforcing bar), why too wet might not be such a good idea (pouring too wet can create small air pockets that lead to water infiltration and early failure), and examples when we pack it much drier still today (for example, when building a dam that needs to be very strong and justifies the extra effort). I have always been taught to mix and place concrete as dry as possible, but after reading these two pages I have a much better idea of why I would want to do so, and I am better aware that there is a continuum of options to choose from, each with benefits and consequences. The central thread to The Good House Book is the rhetorical question of "What is a good building." The short answer, supplied by the author, is that a good building is specific: moving deftly from generalities to specifics makes this book not only entertaining, but practical. Buildings can do more than last a long time and provide shelter. They also affect our spirit. Here is an example of one question explored by The Good House Book: Why does being in one space make you feel good (monastery), while being in another makes you feel otherwise (modern shopping mall). One of my favorite chapters is Applications, which interviews a number of owner/builders about their homes-concept, design, structure, relationship to and protection from the environment, lessons learned, and advice to aspiring builders. The Good House

Book will surely appeal to those interested in building their own alternative house. Beyond that, it will thoughtfully engage anyone interested in what makes a good house good, and any house better. The Good House Book is thoughtful and thorough, a very good book indeed.

Okay - so I've never thought about the actual mechanics of building a house nor about the choices that allow us to enjoy the beauty of the planet without doing it harm. My concerns have usually been of the strictly visual - I am an artist. This book is almost startlingly good - Clarke Snell has managed to stimulate even the most laissez-faire amongst us to pay attention to laws respecting our environment and combine them with our desires for beauty and comfort not only for the past but indeed for the future.

Very comprehensive book which expertly and clearly details the differences between natural/sustainable methods and ideas versus conventional methods. The book makes an incredible case for natural building and the philosophy of sustainability. After reading this book it's hard to understand why you wouldn't want to build a house this way. On a personal note, this book has been inspirational to me as an undergrad student trying to get into an architecture school and train to be a sustainable architect. Also I'm coming from a traditional carpentry background and know that the things Clarke Snell is writing about are right on the money.

Superlative well-balanced, insightful, entertaining, stimulative text, superlative graphics/layout with an abundant and marvelous and beautiful and very effective array of color photographs, superlative resource section, superlative physical book quality including stay-open binding. If you're thinking of building a house or if you're interested in alternative housing possibilities (solar, etc.) or if you're interested in the topic of housing in general or if you'd like an ideal coffee table book, you will probably find this book a delightful fulfillment. (Thank you, , including reviewers, for helping me to discover this book.)

I swear Clarke Snell wrote this book for me - or at least for people like me!! - non construction folks, but handy with a hammer. You won't be able to build your house with only this book, but he presents a very user-friendly introduction to all the requisite concepts, then offers a wonderful reference section for more great info. A very realistic approach, and a very approachable writing style. Other green writers I've found to have a more textbook cadence, but Clarke Snell sounds as if he'd jump right in and help you. Thanks!!

I'm pleased with this purchase. This book covers and compares lots of different types of alternative homebuilding and different issues with each, though obviously not in the level of detail the books do that are focused exclusively on one type of construction. But does better job than those more focused books on comparing pros and cons. Most of the single-construction-type books evangelize for their particular favored types, and gloss over potential problems. Good illustrations, too.

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