



EcoNest: Creating Sustainable Sanctuaries of Clay, Straw, and Timber

Paula Baker-Laporte, Robert Laporte

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EcoNest identifies homes designed and built respectfully, in appreciation of the harmony and beauty of nature and in a way that uses nature's resources so as to consume less energy, create less waste, nurture our health, and enrich our senses.

A bird builds its nest using the materials at hand to create a perfect shelter for its bioregion. It doesn't fly to the next state for twigs nor does it build a home that is bigger than it needs. Instinctively it creates an environment that is nurturing, nontoxic, and free of synthetic chemicals. Like the bird, humans desire shelter that is cozy and nurturing, that satisfies the soul, mind, and body. This is the econest.

A true econest also involves a timber frame and walls created with a mix of straw and clay. This unique method of green building avoids the typical problems involved with conventional building, such as industrial waste, excessive chemical usage, and inefficient synthetic insulation. Baker-Laporte and Laporte explain how to avoid the pitfalls of modern homes and how to avoid acute chemical sensitivity, and they focus on how to simply live in harmony with nature.

EcoNest profiles ten different homes located around the country, including a floor plan with interior and exterior photos for each. Chapters include Building with Light Straw/Clay, The Elements of Econest Design and Construction, and Eight Common Questions About Econests.

Paula Baker-Laporte, A.I.A., graduated from the University of Toronto, School of Architecture, in 1978. She has been active in a wide-ranging residential architectural practice based in Santa Fe, New Mexico, since 1986. Her previous books include Prescriptions for a Healthy House, and she is a contributing author to A People's Ecology: Explorations in Sustainable Living edited by Gregory Cajete, The Healthy House, and The Art of Natural Building.

Robert Laporte is the founder of the Econest Building Company and the Natural House Building Centre, and is author of Mooseprints: A Guide to Holistic Building. He served on the original board of directors for the Timber Framers Guild from 1985 to 1987. He is a professional builder specializing in earth, straw, and timber-frame structures. Robert and Paula's econest projects have been featured on HGTV and in several magazines, including Natural Home, Fine Homebuilding, Residential Architect, Organic Style Magazine, Yoga Journal, and The Inspired House.

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