

Eco-friendly alternative

MONIQUE DUVAL

Pelican Park became a hub of cob mixing last Saturday May 23 when people attended a cob building workshop hosted by Nick Ralphs.

Cob is a mixture of mud, straw and clay used for natural building.

Mr Ralphs, a quantity surveyor and member of the Green Building Council, said the aim of the workshop was to show people an alternative building method that's easy, affordable and eco-friendly.

The team built a feature wall using a cob mixture and empty wine bottles as trimmings.

Using only their feet, the team started

by laying a mat and "kneading" the mixture by stomping on it.

Those present were taught how to build a wall using only their hands and feet to layer and shape the cob, and Carol Prag said she was "amazed by how easy it was".

"I am a teacher and I'm hoping to start a cob project at my school, this will help to teach the children how to work together and it is also an environmentally friendly way to build," Mrs Prag said.

Mr Ralphs has used cob to create a fish pond and a braai area in backyard of his home on Pelican Park.

The braai area, that took just over two weeks to complete, consists of a sitting

area, a support wall and a clay oven. The wall was decorated with empty wine bottles to add colour.

Mr Ralphs has also built a wall by stacking old tyres on top of each other, wrapping them in chicken wire and plastering the structure with cob.

"The features I have built in my backyard have all been done with recycled materials and cob," he said, adding that cob is one of the oldest and most environmentally friendly building methods.

"It's simple and allows you to be creative but requires a lot of work."

● Anyone who would like more information on the cob building workshop can call Nick Ralphs on 084 280 7028 or email nickralphs@vodamail.co.za



■ The cob-mixing team are clockwise from left: Nick Ralphs, Tsitsi Makina, Doreen Prag, Carol Prag, Jonathan Prag, Calridge Prag, Altus le Roux and Mary Prag.