

Rainwater Harvesting

Efficient water use is increasingly important to Texas. With the state's growing population and limited supply of both groundwater and surface water, Texans must use water wisely. Rainwater harvesting, which was a common water conservation method in the early 1900's, is an innovative approach becoming popular again.

Rainwater harvesting captures, diverts and stores rainwater for later use. Rainwater can supply water for household, landscape, wildlife and agricultural uses. It can even be used for drinking, with proper treatment. But the easiest way to use stored rainwater is for landscaping. Harvesting rainwater for use in the home landscape:

- Saves you money by reducing your water bills.
- Reduces demand on the municipal water supply.
- Makes efficient use of a valuable resource.
- Reduces flooding, erosion and contamination of surface water with sediments, fertilizers and pesticides in rainfall run-off.

Why would you want to use rainwater? Rainwater harvesting:

- Promotes self-sufficiency and an appreciation for water resources
- Promotes water conservation, providing a "new" water resource
- Saves energy requiring only a small pump or gravity flow to create water pressure in household pipes
- Makes available a "pure" supply of water

What are the advantages of using rainwater?

- Local erosion and flooding from impervious cover associated with buildings is lessened as a portion of local rainfall is diverted into collection tanks with less polluted stormwater to manage.
- Rainwater is one of the purest sources of water available. Its quality almost always exceeds that of surface or groundwater. It does not come into contact with soil or rocks where it can dissolve minerals and salts nor does it come into contact with many of the pollutants that are often discharged into local surface waters or contaminate ground water supplies. However, rainwater quality is influenced by where it falls. Rainfall in areas where heavy industry or other activities pollute the air may not have the same purity as rain falling in more pristine areas.
- Rainwater often has a nitrogen content which provides a slight fertilizing effect for plants.
- Rainwater is soft. It can significantly lower the quantity of detergents and soaps needed for cleaning. Soap scum and hardness deposits are not an issue. There is no need for a water softener as there often is with well water.

More information on rainwater harvesting is available through the Texas Cooperative Extension Bookstore at <http://tcebookstore.org>, publication number B-6153.

Remember: what you do affects the quality and quantity of the water you drink and use. By keeping that in mind, you are helping protect water resources now and in the future. Help save Texas water and make every drop count.

