

SAVE YOUR RAIN FOR A SUMMER DAY

Winter rainfall is wonderful for the garden, and wouldn't it be nice to capture some of it for use in the summer? Installing a rainwater catchment system can save both water and money. One family in Aptos installed enough rain catchment tanks to store 6,500 gallons of water. "We worked with local vendors and water district employees who helped make the project fairly straightforward," said the owners. "And, on top of the free water we will use for irrigation, we received rebates from Soquel Creek Water District that are worth nearly a year's supply of potable water!"



There are five components to a rainwater harvesting/catchment system, the; 1) Collection Surface, 2) Conveyance, 3) Container, 4) Outflow and 5) Overflow.

1. Collection Surface: First you'll need to identify the surface that you'll "catch" the water on usually a rooftop. Then identify the way to get the water to the container and then from the container, out to the landscape. See if you can gravity feed the water in the system the entire way, otherwise you'll need a pump.
2. Conveyance: Now you'll need to find a way to get the water from the collection surface to the container- usually a gutter and downspout, but you can use different types of plastic pipes as well. To keep your tanks clean from summer dirt and debris, install a pre-filter or first-flush device before the water enters the containers.
3. Container: Containers come in a variety of shapes, sizes, colors and materials and there are many businesses in our county that sell them. Your containers should be secured to the ground on a flat area and must have a backflow prevention device if they are connected to your potable water supply. Containers must have mesh mosquito guards at both inflow and outflow points and if the container is 5,000 gallons or more, you'll need to pour a concrete pad and get a permit.
4. Outflow: The outflow to the landscape can be achieved by a watering can, bucket or hose. If the container is high enough, you can gravity feed with a hose (each foot your raise the tank will increase pressure about a half pound per square inch (psi). Make sure it's secure!
5. Overflow: Last but not least, you'll want to estimate the amount of water that will be shed from your collection surface. The formula is: Square feet of roof in square feet x 0.625 gallons of water = gallons of water per inch of rain. Since you'll store much less water than is "caught" you'll need a place for the overflow. This is the time to get creative and really use your rainwater to your advantage. For more information on handling rainwater run-off, see the Stormwater, Drainage and Erosion materials found here:

<http://www.rcdsantacruz.org/publications>

"It feels great to be irrigating our landscape and gardens with water harvested from the sky," one owner says. Most local water districts offer rebates on purchased catchment tanks. Find your district's offer on our rebate chart on page 16!

If you want an in-depth and fascinating read, try any of Brad Lancaster's books: Harvesting Rainwater for Drylands and Beyond.



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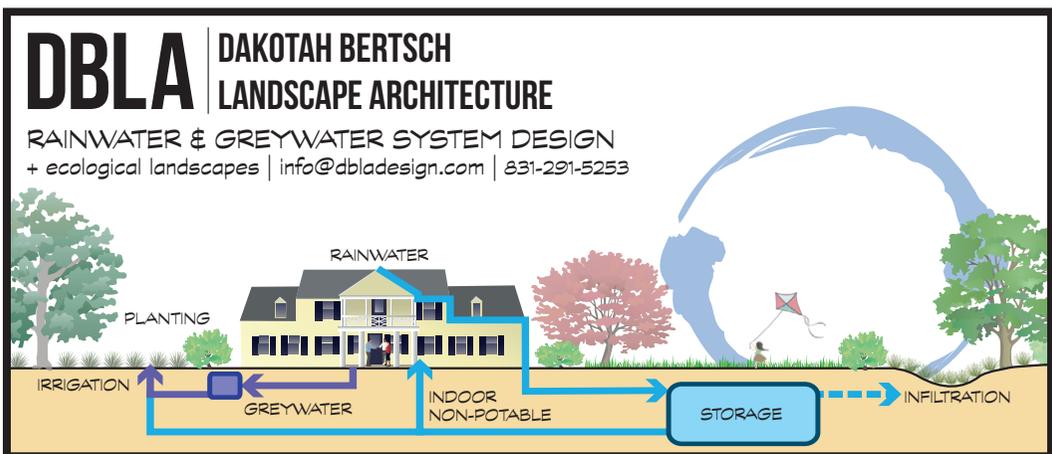
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