

Bushman Slimline Tank



The Original Rainwater Pillow



Tuff Tech Flex Bag



With higher Cal Am rates coming in January and heavy rainfall likely, this is a good time to look into your water collection & storage options

Harvesting The Rain

By KATHRYN MCKENZIE NICHOLS

CATCHING AND STORING RAINWATER has been the modus operandi for humankind for thousands of years, but leave it to modern man to find new ways of doing it.

Water-conscious Monterey County residents can choose from among a wide variety of water storage containers, ranging from simple rain barrels to artfully designed, ultra-skinny units that are well suited to tight spaces.

Renewed concern over the issue is now prompting homeowners to seek out methods of collecting these free liquid assets and then using the water during the dry months.

"There's a lot of interest," said rainwater harvesting consultant Roger Manley of Monterey, who has been getting the word out lately through free workshops and presentations. He'll lead a workshop Dec. 5 at the Monterey Regional Waste Management District in Marina, where locals can learn about how best to stockpile water in the winter and save it for when it's most needed.

At that event, participants will learn the ins and outs of home water collection, and also be eligible to purchase 55-gallon rain barrels made from recycled olive containers at a nominal cost – just \$30.

"They're no longer usable for olives, but they'll last a long time as a rain barrel," said Manley.

Manley himself reduced his own water usage by 75,000 gallons over the past year, and has three storage containers that can hold 1,600 gallons at home to collect water for his plants.

Not only is rainwater harvesting the eco-conscious thing to do, it can also save a lot of money. California American Water Company rates are going up in January to encourage residents to save water. Anyone who doesn't want to pay higher rates needs to conserve, find a different water source, or both.

Landscaping is notorious for sucking up vast quantities of water. The good news is that it's an easy

area in which to cut back, Manley said. By planting drought-resistant shrubs and taking a careful look at how much water is being used, it's possible to save thousands of gallons with little effort.

In past years, people have been put off the idea of rainwater collection because of the bulkiness of the storage tanks; that's all changing as new products come on the market.

"They don't have to be ugly," Manley says.

Take, for instance, the Rainwater Hog, which looks like a giant green Lego piece but is only 9 1/2 inches wide. The svelte building-blocks can be used either horizontally or vertically – think lining fences or stashed under floors – and linked together to provide additional storage.

Other slim entries in the field are made by Bushman USA and Waterwall Tanks, which are taller and thinner than traditional water tanks and can be set right next to the home.

"They're more aesthetically pleasing," said Manley, and with a smaller footprint, are suitable for petite back yards.

Another option are "pillow tanks," which can be stuffed just about anywhere and filled, such as under a subfloor or a deck. There are also flexible rain barrels made by Tuff Tech Bags, originally developed for military applications and now adapted for the home market, Manley said.

Manley suggests that residents interesting in saving water contact Cal Am for free home water audits, and the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, which offers rebates on water-saving appliances and cisterns – that's any kind of water storage unit – up to 3,000 gallons. Manley also has a Web site with useful information, Central Coast Rainwater Harvesting, at www.ccrwh.com.

For information or to register for the Dec. 5 workshop, call the Monterey Regional Waste Management District at 384-5313.

Elements



The Rainwater Hog

A water conservation workshop conducting by rainwater harvesting consultant Roger Manley will be held December 5 at the Monterey Regional Waste Management District in Marina. For information or to register, call 384-5313.