



Rainwater tanks and collectors

Rainwater tanks are part of traditional Australian life, especially in country and rural locations where a piped reliable water supply for domestic purposes was not available. This is still the case for those on rural residential blocks in the region. Urban dwellers are also turning to rainwater tanks and collectors to supplement piped supplies.



THE BENEFITS

Rainwater tanks play an important role in managing the flow of stormwater during and after rain events. Stored water is slowly released when watering the garden or diverted to sewage to flush toilets, wash cloths or in dishwashers.

Rainwater tanks are now available in many designs and sizes to suit every domestic situation from the small courtyard garden to the large rural residential garden.

Collecting, storing and using tank water on the garden allows you to moderate the impact of dry spells, including droughts, where restrictions may apply to the use of piped water. This allows you to keep your soil moist, which in turn promotes soil life activity and further water infiltration.

Reducing the amount of sediment leaving blocks is critical to keeping our waterways healthy. Sediment carries with it nutrients, like phosphorous, that encourage blue-green algae to grow in our waterways. Blue-green algae is a danger to humans and animals and makes our waterways unusable.





INSTALLING YOUR RAINWATER TANK

With due care a handy person can install tanks and stands, irrigation systems, a pressure boosting pump for irrigation as well as modified rainwater guttering, downpipes and first flush diverters. A licensed plumber is required to install connections for use of rainwater inside the home, including pressure boosting pumps and automatic mains water diverters. An electrician is required to install all electrical outlets and fixed wiring for pumps.

For further details about the installation requirements for tanks, contact Access Canberra on **13 22 81** or your local council.

WHAT TYPE AND SIZE OF TANK DO I NEED?

The answer to this question relies on several related factors:

- » how much rain falls each year
- » what roof area is available to capture the rain
- » what will the collected water be used for
- » what space is available for tanks.

There are handy online tools which calculate what size rainwater tank best suits your needs such as the 'tankulator' available at <http://tankulator.ata.org.au/>.

Most residential rainwater tanks are made from plastic, fibreglass, concrete, corrugated galvanised steel or corrugated steel lined with plastic. All are suitable for irrigation or the toilet.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

Rainwater tank prices vary according to size, material, finish, strength and quality. It is worth comparing prices from several suppliers. Other installation costs will vary according to the complexity of your system but may include:

- » transportation of material to your site
- » alteration to gutters and downpipes
- » tank stand foundation work
- » a first flush rainwater diverter
- » inlet and overflow pipe insect screens
- » plumbing pipes and fittings
- » engaging a licensed plumber for household plumbing
- » automatic mains water diverter
- » a pump to increase flow rates
- » associated electrical works.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO MAINTAIN MY RAINWATER TANK?

It is important to regularly maintain rainwater tanks. The main things to check are the filter, the gutters, your first flush device, your pressure pump and mains switching device.

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

ACT Government Rainwater tanks: Guidelines for residential properties in Canberra: www.planning.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/890779/Rainwater_tanks.pdf

Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council Maintaining a Rainwater Tank Information Sheet: www.qcc.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/1170/Maintaining%20a%20rainwater%20tank%20-%20Queanbeyan.pdf.aspx

Rainwater Harvesting Association of Australia: www.rainwaterharvesting.org.au

Environmental Health Committee - Guidance on Use of Rainwater Tanks: www.health.gov.au

Sydney Water Maintaining your Rainwater Tank: www.sydneywater.com.au/SW/your-home/saving-water-at-home/Rainwatertanks/buying_and_installing_rwt/index.htm