

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

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Catching Rainwater

Using Water from the Sky Helps the Bottom Line

By Chris Lavin



Photo Chris Lavin

Luckily, Suzanne Jones of Bollinger Canyon got the idea several years ago, before the drought hit hard: Buy a tank that could hold extra water, in case the spring on her property went

dry. She went to Napa Valley and bought a 10,000-gallon stainless steel tank previously used for wine making for a lot less than the same tanks cost now. And she is so glad.

“Last year we held onto the rainwater, to use domestically,” Jones said. That worked out especially because of the drought. “By October, the spring can be quite low.” The spring – the

literal kind, with water – gets down to trickling out about 50 gallons per day. That could be cause for worry if you have to have water, not just for people but for livestock and plants.

According to the state Water Quality Control Board, the average water use by us Californians is about 80 gallons per day per person, so if you have, say, two people in the house, you can do the math. Dishwashing and showering and flushing the toilet just add up to that much more water going down the drain. If two parents have two kids, they’re looking at an average 320 gallons, and it’s often more.

Yet while the “if it’s yellow it’s mellow, if it’s brown flush it down” moniker is the catch-phrase of some households, more people are using rainwater to ameliorate their public utilities’ outflow of treated water in place of water that doesn’t really need to be treated.

“You can use the rainwater for anything,” said Lee Lawrence, who lives on the outskirts of Moraga and has about a dozen barrels. “It’s perfectly okay to drink.”

(Some at the Water Quality Control Board disagree that rainwater can be consumed without treatment.

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