



Rainwater Harvesting

Rainwater harvesting is the capture, storage, and use of rainwater for a suitable purpose (34 Texas Administrative Code §3.318(a)(5)).

Why harvest rainwater?

Rainwater is of superior quality: zero hardness, sodium free, and nearly neutral pH. Harvesting rainwater can reduce demand on traditional water supplies and can provide water in areas without access to a conventional water supply system. Plus, rainwater is free!

How much rainwater?

As a general rule of thumb, for every inch of rain that falls on a 2,000-square-foot roof, about 1,000 gallons of water can be collected. In Austin, which receives approximately 32 inches of rain per year, about 32,000 gallons of water can be collected annually.

Incentives

The Texas Legislature allows the exemption of part or all of the assessed value of the property on which approved water conservation initiatives, such as rainwater harvesting, are made (Texas Tax Code §11.32).

Individuals planning to install rainwater harvesting systems should check with their respective county appraisal districts for guidance on exemption from county property taxes.

In addition, the Texas Tax Code exempts rainwater harvesting equipment, supplies, and labor for the installation of rainwater harvesting systems from state sales tax (Texas Tax Code §151.355). To claim this exemption, present a Texas Sales and Use Tax Exemption Certificate (back of Form 01-339) to the supplier of the equipment at the time of purchase. Find the form online at www.comptroller.texas.gov/forms/01-339.pdf.

Some municipalities, local water providers, and counties also offer rebates and financial incentives to promote rainwater harvesting as part of their water conservation initiatives.

Statewide Support

Texas has several laws supporting rainwater harvesting. Texas Property Code prevents a homeowner's association from prohibiting the use of rainwater harvesting systems (Texas Property Code §202.007). The state also requires certain new state facilities to incorporate rainwater harvesting systems in their design (Texas Government Code §447.004(c)(8)).

Municipalities and counties are also encouraged to promote rainwater harvesting at residential, commercial, industrial, and educational facilities through incentives such as discounts for rain barrels or rebates for water storage facilities (Texas Local Government Code §580.004).

Additionally, a municipality or county cannot deny a building permit solely because the facility will implement rainwater harvesting; however, it may require that the system comply with the minimum state standards established for such systems (Texas Local Government Code §580.004).

TWDB Services

The Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) provides information to the public on all aspects of rainwater harvesting through the TWDB website, with printed materials, and through other outreach and education efforts. The Texas Manual on Rainwater Harvesting (3rd edition, 2005), a popular guide published by the TWDB, provides an introduction to rainwater harvesting and to designing residential and small-scale commercial systems. The TWDB has provided limited financial support for rainwater harvesting research studies and is required to make rainwater harvesting training available to permitting staff of certain municipalities and counties (Texas Local Government Code §580.004(b)).

Texas Rain Catcher Award

The Texas Rain Catcher Award is a competition and recognition program established by the TWDB to promote rainwater harvesting and to recognize the contribution of individuals and entities pursuing it as a water conservation strategy.

The competition began on October 1, 2007, and—with the exception of TWDB employees and Board members—is open to all individuals, companies, organizations, municipalities, and other local and state governmental entities in Texas. The deadline for applications each year is June 30.

More Information

To learn more about the TWDB's rainwater harvesting activities, please visit: www.twdb.texas.gov/innovativewater/rainwater.

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