

# WaterWise and Rainwater Tanks

*Rainwater tanks can provide a renewable supply of water. Installing a rainwater tank in your home can reduce demand on our precious water supplies, reduce your water bills and reduce the impact of stormwater.*

## Checklist

- ▶ Decide if a rainwater tank is suitable for your house and needs
- ▶ Choose the size and type of your tank
- ▶ Check with your local authority to see how health, building or planning regulations apply
- ▶ Have your tank professionally installed
- ▶ Maintain your rainwater tank – tanks are low maintenance, not no maintenance
- ▶ Enjoy the rewards – rainwater in urban areas can be used outdoors as well as for toilet flushing and cold washing of clothes in washing machines
- ▶ Screen your rainwater tank to prevent breeding mosquitoes

**Tip for Tanks:** Use your rainwater tank as well as water-saving devices such as dual flush toilets and at least three star-rated showerheads to save even more money on your water bill.

## Costs

This varies depending on type, size and materials however a standard 5000 litre tank will cost around \$1000.

### Other costs to consider include:

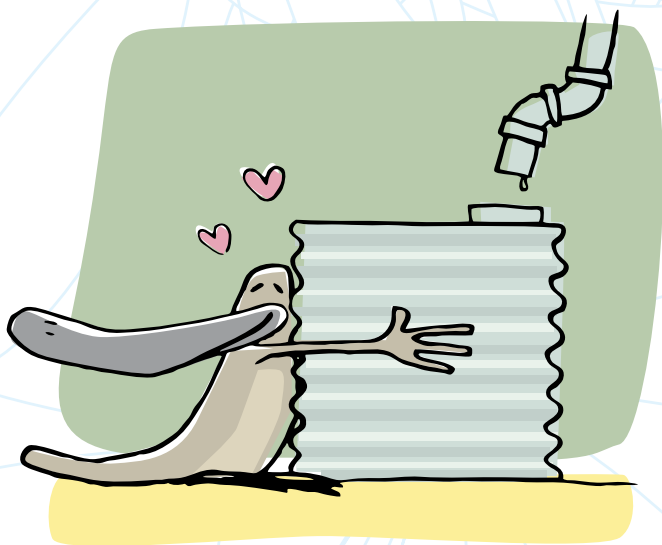
- ▶ transportation
- ▶ installation
- ▶ alterations to gutter and downpipes
- ▶ tank stand or foundation
- ▶ additional plumbing
- ▶ ongoing maintenance

## What size tank do I need?

This depends on your local rainfall patterns, and varies considerably across Queensland.

Size will also depend on your roof catchment area, the number of people in your house and the way you use it.

Generally the larger the tank, the more effective it is in conserving water. A minimum tank capacity of 3000 litres is recommended for external uses and 5000 litres for toilet flushing, laundry and outdoor uses.



## factsheet

### Types of tanks

Rainwater tanks come in a variety of shapes and are made from a range of materials – metal, concrete, polythene or fibreglass. They can be placed above ground, underground, under the house or even incorporated into fences or walls so they don't impact on the aesthetics of your home.

#### There are two tank systems:

**Gravity systems** rely on gravity to supply rainwater by placing the tank on a stand at a suitable height. Gravity systems use no energy, so they produce no greenhouse gas emissions.

**Pressure systems** use a pump to deliver rainwater to household and garden fixtures.

A trickle top-up system can also be used to top up your rainwater tank with mains water when the tank level is low (only where there is internal use such as toilet flushing). If you have local water restrictions they will apply to the tank.

### Drinking rainwater

In areas where drinking water is supplied it is always preferable to use reticulated water for drinking purposes.

Provided your rainwater tank is well-maintained, it should be quite safe to drink. The water should be clear and have little taste or smell.

Collecting rainwater for drinking and cooking is not recommended in areas affected by airborne pollution from very heavy traffic, industrial activities or agricultural crop dusting or spraying.

### Care and maintenance

Simple steps can be taken to help rainwater quality:

- Regularly check and clean gutters, roof catchments and tank screens
- Remove overhead branches
- Consider installing gutter screens or guards
- Ensure your tank does not become a mosquito breeding site by preventing access and cleaning screens regularly
- Check your tank for sludge every two to three years and have the tank cleaned if there is a thick layer of sludge at the bottom

### Is my roof suitable?

Rainwater for drinking can be collected from most types of roofs, except those:

- Painted with lead-based paint (including primers)
- Coated with bitumen-based materials
- With chemically treated timbers or lead flashing
- Parts of the roof incorporating flues from wood burners
- Where pipes from appliances such as air conditioners discharge onto the roof catchment or associated gutters