



## Rainwater tanks

Rainwater from your roof can be collected and used in your garden, toilet, laundry, bathroom or kitchen.

The simplest arrangement for a rainwater tank is to connect it to your downpipes and use it for garden watering. You can bucket or gravity feed water without the need for a pump or additional stormwater plumbing.

However, maximum benefit of installing rainwater tanks, in terms of water saving and stormwater protection, is generated when the tank water is used for internal purposes such as toilet flushing and clothes washing as well as for garden watering.

### CHOOSING THE SIZE OF YOUR TANK

The size of tank that is best suited to your needs depends on a number of factors, including:

- the area of roof available to capture the rain;
- how you plan to use the rainwater;
- the number of people in your house; and
- the available space to install a tank.

Having a larger tank is not the only way to collect more rainwater.

The larger the roof area connected to the tank, the more water you can collect. A tank connected to one downpipe on a house with four downpipes can only capture approximately 25% of the rain that falls on the roof.

The more uses made of your tank water, the more water will be available over time. If you only use tank water in the garden, very little will be used in the colder months, so it is possible the tank will fill and overflow. Using tank water for toilet flushing or in the washing machine means the tank water is used all through the year and there is less

likelihood of overflow losses. Therefore you increase the total amount of water you collect.

Here are some examples for an average Canberra house and garden for a two to three person household. These results will vary from household to household, and depend on annual rainfall.

A 5,000 litre tank connected to 100 square metres of roof when the water is only used for garden watering will provide around 48,000 litres of water per year. If you also use the tank water for toilet flushing and in the washing machine, the same tank size and roof area will provide 59,000 litres of water per year - an additional yield of 11,000 litres.

Increasing from a 5,000 litre tank to a 10,000 litre tank, when the tank is connected to a 100 square metres of roof and the water is used for garden watering, toilet flushing and laundering, increases the amount of water available for use from 59,000 litres to 61,000 litres - an additional yield of only 2,000 litres per year. However, increasing the contributing roof area from 100 square metres to 150 square metres increases the yield from a 5,000 litre tank from 59,000 litres to 82,000 litres - an increased yield of 23,000 litres per year.

The ACT Government's *Rainwater tanks - Guidelines for residential properties in Canberra* provides information about installation requirements, issues to consider, regulations and approvals, as well as tables and charts to assist you to size your tank.

## PLANNING/BUILDING APPROVALS

Installation of a rainwater tank does not need planning or building approval if it is:

- less than 20,000 litres in size;
- no higher than 2.4 m above natural ground level;
- not built of reflective, white or off-white material; and
- installed to the side or rear of the house, at least 3 m from the rear boundary and 1.5 m from the side boundary.

If your tank is outside these guidelines you need approval from the ACT Planning and Land Authority.

## PLUMBING REGULATIONS

Any plumbing connection to fixtures located inside the house must be installed by a licensed plumber and must be separate from the mains water supply.

The Water and Sewerage Regulations 2001 require that all single residential homes and extensions started after 1 January 2005 must incorporate rainwater supply plumbing to toilets and washing machines to provide the option for future use of rainwater. For more information contact ACT Planning and Land Authority.

## WATER RESOURCES STRATEGY

*Think water, act water* is the ACT Government's strategy for sustainable water use and management. It aims to reduce Canberra's per person water consumption by 12 per cent by 2013 and 25 per cent by 2023.

*Think water, act water* provides a comprehensive framework for a partnership between the community, industry and government in managing, using and conserving the water resources of the region.

It includes an extensive range of measures, which will ensure water supply security for the ACT, protect and improve ecological values associated with our waterways, and improve the amenity of urban areas.

The strategy outlines a range of initiatives to be put in place to assist Canberrans to increase water efficiency around the home and garden.

## WATER EFFICIENCY INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

You may wish to consider the home and garden water efficiency programs offered as part of the ACT Government's water strategy, *Think water, act water*.

Details of all ACT Government water efficiency incentive programs are available from [www.thinkwater.act.gov.au](http://www.thinkwater.act.gov.au)

### MORE INFORMATION

For more information on water issues, water efficiency rebates and *Think water, act water* initiatives:

Ph: 13 22 81

Email: [WaterResources@act.gov.au](mailto:WaterResources@act.gov.au)

Website: [www.thinkwater.act.gov.au](http://www.thinkwater.act.gov.au)

For more information on the design, siting, plumbing and regulations for rainwater tanks:

Ph: 6207 1931 (design & siting)

Ph: 6207 6261 (plumbing)

The booklet *Rainwater tanks — Guidelines for residential properties in Canberra* is available from ACT Planning and Land Authority.

Ph: 6207 1926

Website: [www.actpla.act.gov.au](http://www.actpla.act.gov.au)