



NATURESCAPE RAINWATER HARVESTING INSTALLATION & MATERIALS GUIDE

Your NatureScape project could include a landscape feature, such as a swale or rain garden, that can be used to capture rainwater; or, you may choose to install a cistern to capture rainwater for use around your property. Use this guide to select, purchase, and install materials to prepare your landscape prior to your NatureScape installation. If you are not sure what you need, your NatureScape designer may be able to provide guidance.

HARVEST RAINWATER WITH A LANDSCAPE FEATURE

You will need to redirect rainwater falling on your roof to the feature in your plan. You can replace your downspout(s) with a rain chain or simply redirect your downspout so rainwater flows to the feature. You may also choose to install a rain barrel (or two) to store some water before it reaches the feature.

Materials Needed



Depending on the current configuration of your home and landscape, and your preferences, you may need to purchase the following materials to redirect your rainwater. All links are provided as examples only.

- A [rain chain](#) to direct water to the feature (if desired)
- Accessories, such as: Rain chain [installation kit](#), [debris blocker](#), and [anchor stake](#)
- Optional: Rain barrel (or two),* and a short garden hose to direct overflow to feature
- [Downspout extender](#) or [splash block](#)

* A barrel with 2 outlets is recommended. One outlet can be used for overflow to the feature while the other one can be connected to additional barrels if desired.

Installation Guidance

The following is general guidance for proper installation of a downspout directed to your feature. It is recommended that you seek professional assistance to retrofit your downspout, particularly if gutters need to be modified. Downspout and gutter work should be performed by general contractors, D-24 (metal products), and C-43 (sheet metal) licensed contractors.

-  Ensure all rainwater falling on the roof area selected for harvesting will be directed by gutters to the rain chain or downspout.
-  If installing rain barrels, all overflow should be directed to the feature. Rain barrels should not restrict access to walkways or pathways.



Resources

- [South Bay's Homeowner Guide to Rainwater Harvesting](#) – Pages 7-8 and 15-16 provide step-by-step instructions on how to redirect a downspout to a rain garden or a rain barrel.
- [Rain Chain Installation Guide](#) – Step-by-step instructions to install a rain chain from Tree People, a SoCal NGO.
- [RainChains.com](#) – This local company provides many options for rain chains, installation kits, and accessories such as debris blockers, mosquito screens, and anchor stakes.
- [Rain Barrel Tip Sheet](#) – Tips to place and maintain a rain barrel.
- [SoCalWaterSmart Rain Barrel Rebates](#) – Obtain incentives for rain barrels and review incentive terms.

HARVEST RAINWATER WITH A CISTERN

Cisterns are large rain barrels that can typically capture all the rainwater from a portion of roof. They come in numerous sizes and shapes. The NatureScape Design Team will measure your roof and let you know how big of a cistern you will need.

Materials Needed

Depending on the current configuration of your home and landscape, and your preferences, you may need to purchase the following materials to install a cistern.






- A cistern that is constructed out of hard, rigid plastic and must continuously hold its shape (collapsible/ flexible/ soft-sided cisterns or homemade cisterns are not allowed)
- Additional valves, pipes, and fittings
- An overflow spigot and hose for overflow
- A cover to prevent mosquitos, rodents, and debris from entering



Picture from Catching H2O Me
<http://www.h2o-me.com/>

Installation Guidance

The following is general guidance for proper installation of a cistern. The NatureScape program recommends seeking professional assistance from a contractor. Downspout work should be performed by general contractors, D-24 (metal products), and C-43 (sheet metal) licensed contractors. The NatureScape program cannot guarantee work provided by a contractor.

-  Check with your city departments and community associations to understand all regulations, permitting requirements, and landscape requirement prior to selecting and installing a cistern.
-  Mount your cistern so that it receives all water unimpeded from a downspout.
-  Ensure the cistern is elevated 6 inches off the ground on a solid foundation and does not block or restrict access to walkways or pathway.
-  The cistern should be strapped to your home for safety if the cistern height is two times greater than the width.
-  Ensure that any overflow will be directed to adjacent landscaping.

Resources

- [SoCalWaterSmart Cistern Rebates](#) – Obtain a portion of your total incentive by applying at this website.
- [The Tank Source](#) and [Tank Depot](#) – National suppliers of rainwater storage tanks.
- [HarvestingRainwater.com](#) – This website by expert Brad Lancaster provides various sources for selecting and obtaining cisterns.
- [How to get a cistern for your home](#) – General guidance from Tree People, a Southern California nonprofit on how to select and buy a cistern.
- [How to install a cistern](#) – Instructions on how to install a cistern from a landscape company in San Luis Obispo. Note that NatureScape does the site planning for you.