## RAINWATER HARVESTING SYSTEMS

Determining whether a RWH system is the right answer for a particular situation can often seem to be a complicated matter. While there are a lot of considerations, a quick review of the advantages and responsibilities could be helpful.

The following checklist helps show if RWH is right for you.

**IS RAINWATER HARVESTING (RWH) RIGHT FOR ME?**

Installing a RWH system requires a commitment in investment and management, and the willingness to pay for services you cannot or are unwilling to do yourself. At the same time, the benefits of water availability and the environmental good that RWH systems provide can be enormous. The following points help to assess your options:

**Existing water supply is restricted or of poor quality**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ◯ need more/better water | ◯ want more/better water | ◯ could use more/better water |

**Environmental sustainability and improvement are important to me**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ◯ extremely important | ◯ very important | ◯ somewhat important |

**Investment in sound environmental practices is something I am willing to tackle**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ◯ very willing | ◯ might be willing | ◯ not sure |

**Commitment to long-term management of a RWH system is not a problem for me**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ◯ not a problem | ◯ willing to consider it | ◯ not sure |

_____ X 5 = _____ + _____ X 3 = _____ + _____ X 1 = _____

TOTAL: _____

*Rating:* *14 or more = likely a good choice*
*10 to 14 = may be right for you*
*8 or less = needs discussion*

*Courtesy KDA 1*

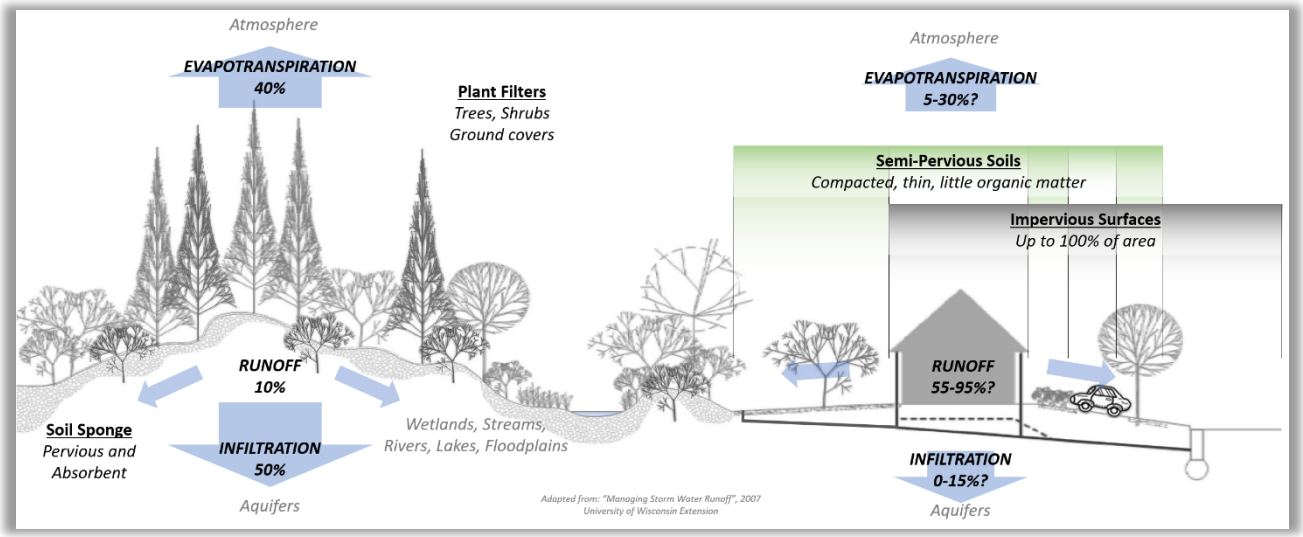
While a number of important factors such as other available sources of water, municipal requirements, and budget will certainly come into play, these questions may help you.

In many cases, *lack of water* is a driving force behind looking into rainwater harvesting. *Sustainable* environmental actions, such as water conservation, are a first step in the evaluation of a system, but *sound environmental practices* bring benefits to the world around us too. *Commitment to*, and *investment in*, these activities is not to be taken for granted – this is serious business, and being informed is very much a necessity.

**Q – Why is rainwater harvesting important in the wettest areas of Canada?**

A – While it may seem that there is an over-abundance of water available on BC's west coast, the truth is that we have a very dry summer period when more water is consumed, especially outdoors. Drought mitigation is only one possible use for rainwater, there are more huge benefits. Using *rainwater as a resource instead of treating it as waste:*

- reduces the demand on treated potable water collection, treatment, and distribution systems, and their management/maintenance costs;
- can postpone extensive new water infrastructure installations for municipalities;
- reduces the reliance and load on existing storm drain systems that cannot cope with more frequent intense storms (part of climate change) by:
  - slowing the stormwater surge, which reduces flooding, erosion, and pollution caused by heavy rainfall events;
  - holding back and releasing stormwater slowly into drain systems, or into the ground for recharging aquifers and ground water reserves;
- can positively affect and improve habitat and ecologically important areas;
- decentralizes supply water systems and is be managed on a site-by-site basis;
- provides an opportunity for multiple-source solutions to water availability.




*Courtesy KDA 2*

Beneficial uses for rainwater, such as irrigation, flushing, laundry, fire suppression, fleet vehicle and street washing, evaporative/thermal cooling, trap priming, and landscape features, are universal. Any region in the world can be improved by mimicking nature and the water cycle as it applies to both built and natural environments.

The commitment to rainwater as a resource goes far beyond the immediate results, and is part of the overall sustainability of environmental and ecological aspects. Incorporating nature into our built environment processes, 'working *with* nature', includes rainwater harvesting, water conservation, and non-destructive uses of this finite, precious resource.