



# Maximizing the use of Rainwater Harvesting during the rainy season

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There are two marked rainy seasons during the year in Guyana - a long rainy season from April to August and a short rainy season from November to January. However, due to the change and variability in climate, weather patterns are becoming unpredictable, not just in Guyana but across the region and around the world. The May -June period is known for frequent and most times intense rainfall in Guyana, this can result in inundation because of too much water on the land with little drainage capacity in some areas. The rainy season can be frustrating since outdoor activities often times

have to be cancelled due to bad weather leaving us trapped indoors.

This week's article points to how the current rainy season which is upon us can directly be of benefit to us and not just farmers and our aquatic friends. Rainwater harvesting refers to the gathering and storage of rainwater running off from surfaces such as roofs or which has falls directly into a storage container e.g. barrel. Many techniques can be applied to harvest rainwater whether in households or industries. Techniques can range from simple to complex depending on the desire and intended use and amount. The most widely used technique is roof rainwater harvesting, this allows users to capture and store a high volume of water compared to the open air method.

Rainwater is second only to distilled water in terms of its purity, however, a number of factors can affect the quality once collected and stored. These factors range from the roofing and storage materials used, birds, lizards and other animals which might come into contact with the harvesting system, and most importantly sanitary practice by harvesters themselves. Once done properly and carefully following best practice methods, benefits can be maximized. The rainwater



can be used for both potable and non-potable uses depending on the quality and the user's

desire. If you are skeptical or think that the rainwater might not be safe for consumption, it can be stored and used for washing concrete, cars, watering gardens, washing dishes, flushing toilets, showers and for washing clothing. It can also be used for drinking and cooking since according to the Global Water Partner – Caribbean 2009, several of the more arid islands in the Caribbean such as Antigua & Barbuda, the Bahamas, and the Virgin Islands, still practiced rainwater harvesting in spite of access to the municipal potable supply. Residents on these islands still favour rainwater in meeting their drinking and cooking needs.

Rainwater harvesting can reduce the demands on traditional ground and surface sources especially tap water and save you big on water bills. It also offers environmental benefits since during the rainy season, collecting rainwater can help to reduce floods in some low lying areas. Apart from this, it also helps in reducing soil erosion and contamination of surface water with pesticides and fertilizers from rainwater run-off which results in cleaner lakes and ponds.

Harvesting the sky's water is free and helps conserve scarce water resources, so next time there's a downpour ensure you catch some of these benefits.

***Share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth, Our Environment”, C/o EIT Division, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, Georgetown or email us at [eit.epaguyana@gmail.com](mailto:eit.epaguyana@gmail.com).***