

Rainwater Harvesting in Hays County

Billy Kniffen
 Menard County Extension Agent
 Agriculture/Natural Resources

Today, there is new interest in rainwater harvesting in Hays County. **Rainwater can be used** for watering landscape turf, landscape plants, gardens and to provide water for pets, wildlife and livestock. Additionally, rainwater can be filtered and used in homes, schools, and businesses in the place of other sources of potable water.



Above photograph is of a raindrop on the spikelet of sideoats grama - the State grass of Texas.

The renewed interest in this time-honored water resource is due to:

- * **rapid growth and development**, accompanied by concern of having enough high quality water available;
- * **escalating environmental and economic** costs of providing water by centralized water systems or by well drilling;
- * **rainwater's purity** making it the gold standard for water;
- * **health concerns** linked to the source and treatment of water; and
- * **cost efficiencies** associated with rainwater harvesting.



Rainwater collection at Elm Grove Elementary in Hays ISD

New!! Water Related Exemptions for Sales Tax. Various types of equipment used for rainwater harvesting, desalination, precipitation enhancement, regional water and wastewater systems, and partnerships of public and private entities to construct or operate regional water supply or waste water systems are now exempt from sales tax. The new exemption is contained in Senate Bill 312. (Senate Bill 2).

How much rainwater can you collect? You can estimate the amount of rainwater that can be harvested from a catchment surface (defined as any surface used to collect rainwater such as a roof) with the following calculation:

$$\text{Catchment area (sq ft)} \times \text{rainfall (in)} \times 0.6 = \text{harvested rainwater (gal)}$$

The average annual rainfall for San Marcos is 21.64 inches. However, it has varied greatly in the last five years from a high of 27.67 inches in 2000 to a low of 17.49 inches in 1999. The average monthly rainfall (in inches) is:

January (0.68)	July (1.51)
February (1.11)	August (1.75)
March (2.44)	September (1.38)
April (1.31)	October (2.09)
May (1.80)	November (2.95)
June (3.65)	December (0.89)