

# Rainwater Harvesting in West Texas

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## Introduction

Rainwater harvesting has a long history and was common method of providing water for homes and landscapes around the turn of the last century. Landscapes were traditionally more cottage type and much less turf was the norm. Also in Texas, springs, creeks and rivers were more prominent 150 years ago and watering holes for wildlife were available even in present desert areas. The change in rangeland's landscape has encouraged expansion of desert acreage, shifting from grassland to invasive forested acres. Demands for more water has resulted in greater soil and water erosion, thus reducing the number of flowing springs by much as 40% in the last 100 years, also creating the destruction of the watering locations available for wildlife. The use of rain water catching in locations deficient of available natural watering holes can increase distribution of wildlife, aid in wildlife restoration projects and attract a greater diversity of wildlife into backyard settings.

Home landscapes, too, have changed from water conserving cottage gardens to miles of turf in urban settings and acres of turf in rural settings. This shift due to lakes, wells, and municipal water supplies has allowed homeowners the luxury of using as much or more of their summer water usage on the lawn than in the home. As population increases in urban areas, aquifers are misused and the current drought being experienced in much of the United States persists, invasion plants are deteriorating watersheds and robbing water from lakes and rivers. Many water impoundments are



**Menard ISD Wildscape Area**

drying up. Water rationing, restrictions, price of water and reduced water quality are all more frequent currently and in years ahead.

Today, there is new interest in rainwater harvesting . 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.

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

- \* 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.**
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