

Bell County Master Gardeners
Tip of the Week
By Jann Dworsky
“Keep that Rainwater!”

The Master Gardener intern class was pleased to hear Billy Kniffen, Water Resource Specialist from A&M give an enthusiastic and sincere talk on Rainwater Harvesting in Texas. Mr. Kniffen spoke without notes during the afternoon of teaching and is living a rainwater harvesting lifestyle. The class was amazed to hear he and his wife use only rainwater collection as their water resource for household use, as well as for the flower and vegetable garden. He has 5 water collection tanks that hold a total of 16,500 gallons of water. That is enough water for their needs for one year if only 9 inches of rain falls.

Mr Kniffen lives in Menard, certainly not a tropical location! Roof space for water collection includes the roof of his house as well as his barn. The water for the drinking and household use has a system of filters for purification. Their household water usage is only 34 gallons a day. About 35 gallons a day are used on the gardens for a total of about 70 gallons a day. The average usage for Killeen and Temple is about 125 gallons per day per person!

He encouraged all of us to conserve water inside the house and keep every drop of rainwater that falls on our place. For the water to run slow, pure, and clear, he advised putting in water gardens in low places to catch and diffuse the water allowing all of it to soak into your yard, flower beds, and trees. Rocks, logs, or berms of dirt placed attractively and strategically can push water to where it can soak into the ground and not run off into the gutters.

To learn more about rainwater harvesting usage in your home, landscape, or for wildlife, livestock, and pets check out the following sites:

Texas AgriLife Extension Service Rainwater Harvesting at
<http://rainwaterharvesting.tamu.edu/>

American Rainwater Catchment Systems Association at <http://www.arcsa.org/>

And also the Texas Manual on Rainwater Harvesting at
<http://www.tceq.state.tx.us>

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact
ask.bcmqa@gmail.com