

# Rainwater Harvesting: Pennies from Heaven

By [Kathryn \(Kathy\) Nichols](#), published Oct 28, 2007

## Capture and Use Your Own Private Water Supply, with Planning and Right Equipment

Bobby Markowitz's clients are often desperate by the time they come to him. Their wells are running dry. Their water is so full of underground muck that it's damaging their plants. They can't get water trucked in.

Look to the skies, Markowitz tells them.

No, it's not a request for divine intervention. Markowitz, a Santa Cruz, Calif., landscape architect, is looking at where water originates - from above.

Markowitz is preaching the gospel of rainwater harvesting, which he sees as the answer to many water issues in California. With proper collection, filtering and storage, there's no reason why most homeowners can't have their own private water supply for their yard. "There's plenty of water, it's just not captured and stored," said Markowitz. "Every time it rains, there are millions and millions of gallons running down the streets."

He insists those millions of gallons could easily be captured and put to use for outdoor water needs.

In the pre-industrial age, it was common practice to store rainwater - something that humankind has done as long as it's had settlements. Fewer than 100 years ago, water became a commodity that came out of an indoor tap, rather than a stream, a well or a rain barrel.

Breaking our dependence on piped-in water is the wave of the future, Markowitz says: "It's not rocket science."

Markowitz designs rainwater collection systems for homeowners around the Monterey Bay, and estimates that this comprises 80 percent of his work these days. People are worried about water - especially on the thirsty Central Coast, where lack of water is hindering development of new homes and businesses in Monterey County.

Jim and Carolyn Bowen used to worry about water for their property high in the Santa Cruz Mountains. After drilling several dry wells, and having to resort to trucked-in water for their garden, they turned to Markowitz.