

Rainwater Harvesting & Rain Gardens



A Sustainable Water Strategy for Palo Alto

Capturing rainwater is one of the most effective ways to build local climate resilience, protect our watersheds, recharge groundwater, and provide a habitat.

I. Why Harvest Rainwater?

- Drought Resilience:** With the 2026 Sierra snowpack facing a significant deficit, local capture reduces our 100% reliance on the SFPUC/Hetch Hetchy system.
- Watershed Protection:** Capturing rain on-site prevents runoff from carrying pollutants (oils, metals, litter) into the Bay and reduces local creek flooding.
- A Habitat for Pollinators:** Rain gardens planted with California natives provide essential food and shelter for local bees, butterflies, and birds, turning your yard into a living ecosystem.

II. Rain Garden: "Slow it, Spread it, Sink it"

A **Rain Garden** is a shallow landscape depression designed to capture and soak up stormwater. It should be at least **10 feet** away from your home's foundation

Basin: A 6-inch deep depression to hold water.

- Soil:** Amended soil (sandy/compost mix) to allow water to sink within 24–48 hours.
- Plants:** Native, drought-tolerant species that can handle "wet feet" in winter and dry soil in summer.

III. Palo Alto & Valley Water Rebates

Before purchasing equipment or digging, you must apply for a rebate through Valley Water.

Project Type	Rebate Amount	Max. Amount
Rain Barrel	\$70 per barrel	\$3,000 (Residential)
Rain Garden	\$2.00 per sq. ft.	\$600 per project

IV. Your 4-Step Action Plan

1. Identify your **downspouts** and site your garden 10' from foundations.
2. Apply for pre-approval at valleywater.org/rebates.
3. For **Design & Installation**, choose to DIY or partner with a designer and contractor with rain garden expertise.
4. Submit photos and receipts for your **rebate**.

For professional design guidance and project support:



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