Coliban WATER

savewater!®

Information sheet

Installing a rainwater tank in Victoria

What plumbing needs to be done?

A plumber will be able to give you some great advice about water tanks, such as the best location and size. You will also be able to get an idea of how much the entire project will cost.

A licensed plumber is required by law wherever a tank is connected to the mains water supply, such as a tank to toilet system. A plumber is also required to connect your gutters to your tank and install an overflow to stormwater. Some tank installations (particularly for large tanks) may require a building permit. Check with your local council.

Preparation

Delivery: In most situations, you can arrange delivery with the manufacturer or retailer. It is important to ensure that there is clear access from the street to where you want to put your tank.

Foundations: The ground where a tank is going to be located needs to be levelled. Larger tanks will also require either sand or concrete foundations. The tank manufacturer's instructions will guide you, but a plumber should also be consulted when deciding where to put your tank to maximise the catchment area.

Gutters: The guttering on your roof is a major part of catching water and will need to be cleared of any leaves or debris. Damaged guttering should be repaired. On some existing houses, the guttering may need to be adjusted to direct the water to the corner of your house where the tank will be installed.

When should I install my tank?

The best time to install a rainwater tank is when you don't need it. Fitting your tank at the beginning of winter will ensure that you have as much water as possible to sustain you during summer.

What accessories will I need?

Pumps: Most rainwater tank systems will require a pump to generate adequate pressure. Washing machines and some irrigation systems require a level of pressure similar to mains water. When connecting your rainwater supply to your toilet or laundry, leading plumbers recommend a pump which will automatically switch to mains supply when your tank water runs dry. In times of water restrictions you must ensure you are not using mains supply on your garden. You also need to provide electricity to the pump close to the tank. Be mindful of neighbours as pumps can be quite loud, nylon blade pumps are quieter than ones with metal blades.

First flush diverters: These devices are useful to divert the first 20 litres of rainfall from entering your tank. This will prevent pollutants on your roof from entering the tank. For example, many roofs have lead flashing which can be dangerous.

Backflow prevention valve: Regulations stipulate that backflow devices must be installed to prevent tank water from entering the mains system. As the name suggests a backflow prevention valve stops water from your tank from entering back into the mains supply. Most households have backflow prevention devices installed at the water meter. Some pumps also act as a backflow prevention so extra valves are not required. Ask your plumber for further advice.

Connections, pipes & fittings: Make sure you ask your plumber about the additional extras you need as they can increase the total cost. Your quote should also include all measures to meet government standards.

Mosquito proofing: A rainwater tank can be an attractive refuge for insects and other creatures, especially as a breeding ground for mosquitoes. There are a range of products that you can install on your downpipes and overflows to prevent insects from getting into your water.

Leaf shedding gutter protectors: Leaves and debris often build up in gutters which effects water flow during heavy downpours and can potentially contaminate your water supply. Gutter protectors, filters and regular maintenance can help to solve this problem.

Tank stands: A tank stand can provide additional pressure if you choose not to install a pump and makes it easier to fill watering cans and buckets at the tank. The type of tank stand or foundation you require will depend on the material, size and weight of your tank. Ensure that you ask your tank manufacturer before you purchase the tank, as the stand may be included. Some stands require building permits so you should consult your local council

Trickle top up systems: This type of system is generally not recommended in Victoria, if the tank contains mains water it can not be used on the garden during water restrictions. Trickle top up systems use a float valve to measure how much water you have in your tank. When the water level gets too low, mains water will trickle into the tank to top it up.

How should I maintain my water tank

Remember that 'prevention is better than the cure', so keep your gutters free from debris with a range of devices or just by cleaning them out regularly. The tank itself needs regular external inspections for leaks and an internal inspection for sludge every few years. This can be dangerous so contact a professional if you need help doing this.

Rebates for tanks

In Victoria, rainwater tanks for garden use (minimum 600L capacity) attract a rebate of $150 and up to $1000 if the tank is connect to the toilet and laundry. In order to claim your rebate from the Victorian State Government, you will require a Certificate of Compliance issued by a licensed plumber. Call 136 186 or visit www.ourwater.vic.gov.au for more information. For residents in other parts of Australia, contact your local council or water authority for more information on rebates.

Will I be charged for the water in my tank?

As of January 2007, both Victorian and Federal Governments opposed taxes on rainwater tanks.

"No consideration has ever been given to taxing rainwater tanks and, in my view, it is inconceivable that any consideration would be given to doing so in the future," said Malcolm Turnbull, Federal Minister for Environment and Water Resources.

Further information

savewater! Alliance: www.savewater.com.au

EME Group: www.emegroup.com.au

enHealth: www.nphp.gov.au

Plumbing Industry Commission: www.pic.vic.gov.au