On collecting rainwater: There’s a drought, and yet it rains, and that’s the thing, isn’t it? The problem with a drought is when it rains, it often gathers in the wrong areas for it to be of use.

On gathering it in the right areas: The idea is that the rain hits the roof and rolls down into the gutter and down the downspout. Instead of going down into the gulley, you intercept it on its way down and capture it in a tank. If you don’t have gutters, you can’t harvest rainwater.

On the bucket: The Rainwater Hog is a water-filled building block. As an architect, I was designing a lot of drought-tolerant gardens. I wanted to fit in rainwater storage without giving up valuable real estate.

On putting it to work: A single Hog, combined with drip irrigation in the Bay Area, can take care of around 12 square feet of low-water-use vegetation for six months.

On quantity: Our tanks are 50 gallons each, but you can couple them together at each downspout and capture as much water as you want.

On quality: Our tanks are food grade plastic, so as long as you filter the leaves and debris out of it before it goes in, the water doesn't go off. I'd wash my clothes with it, I'd shower with it and I'd probably drink it. It's beautiful soft water. I'd heat it with solar and be super green.

On accessing the water: You twist the handle and it’s on. You can screw a hose into the outlet and use gravity to water your garden or wash your car, or you can attach it to a small pump and use a drip irrigation system.

On storing the storage tank: The design has flat walls, which means you can pop it in underneath a deck or underneath the house. Or along the side of the house under the eaves. It’s almost 6 feet tall, 20 inches wide, and 9 1/2 inches deep. On cost: It ranges from $450 for one hog to $2,000 for a row of six that gives you 300 gallons and lots of good karma (www.rainwaterhog.com). We're now making it in Washington state. There's no packaging. You
don't have to drill anything.

**On impulse:** We did West Coast Green, a big expo. We had people five deep around our stand. When I got back to Sydney I said to my husband, Simon, "Northern California is really where it's at. It's the green hub."

**On emigrating:** We wanted to come over here and live while the kids were young. Olivia is 9, Dot is 7. Perfect age, we thought, to uproot them and drag them somewhere else fun. Marin County is absolutely it.

**The hog**

You can run rainwater hogs in a bank vertically along the side of a house and run plants up the side, or you can clad them in lattice and grow string beans, says the designer.

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http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/09/07/CM2K11N18P.DTL

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