

## Battling the summer drought in Gisborne

**As droughts have put the pressure on water use, a rainwater tank is watering the garden, and plumbing maintenance has reduced indoor water use too.**

### Lois' story

We are very keen gardeners, and last winter established a vegetable garden as well as planting a whole lot of native and fruit trees around our home. And of course as we all know, establishing a garden (particularly in Gisborne's free draining silt soils) uses a lot of water.

As the signs of a prolonged drought started to look more certain, we decided to reduce our water use and prepare for the inevitable summer sprinkler bans. Hence, the purchase of a 2000 litre rainwater tank.

With a limited budget, we have installed this ourselves, although since Gisborne is rather earthquake prone, we got a builder in to make the stand for the tank to sit on. Positioned strategically between the house and the vege garden on the southwest side, we have been able to capture about a third of our roof water into the tank. With the tank on a stand, we can use gravity rather than needing a pump. The tank works well for both hand held hosing and using a "leaky hose" system around the fruit trees and my veggie garden has been bountiful.

And, while initially I was very nervous that it wouldn't actually rain enough to collect any water, we have had a couple of small downpours in January and February which both arrived in time to refill the tank (though not unfortunately the council reservoirs).

Something we weren't prepared for (but have now addressed thanks to some DIY plumbing) was that the tank overflowed during a heavy downpour when the whole month's rain fell in five or so hours.

The next stage of the project is to install some rain barrels around the other side of the house to water the front garden.

### **Simple fixes**

We've also undertaken some basic plumbing maintenance. We have fixed the persistent drip on the outdoor tap, installed a flow restrictor on the kitchen tap and made sure that our dual flush toilet is working properly. Leaky toilets are a common water wasting problem – we found that ours was leaking by dropping some food colouring in the cistern.

For more information:

- See Fact sheet on Using Less Water