



Petaluma-based Equinox Landscape installed a waterfall as part of a rainwater catchment pond at a home near Sonoma.

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Petaluma company provides drought solutions

Eric and Angela Parsons of Petaluma aren't fooled by this year's El Niño rains.

They know that California is drought-prone and changing climate will bring greater fluctuations in rainfall in the coming years. They recently hired Petaluma-based Equinox Landscape to design and build a rainwater harvesting system to capture 5,000 gallons of precious rainwater, in addition to reusing 500 gallons of household water per month in the company's greywater system.

A few miles east of Petaluma, on the way towards Sonoma, Equinox installed an 82,000 gallon rainwater harvesting system on a rural residential property. As rain flows off the roof of a barn, it is captured in four 5,000-gallon tanks, with overflow directed into a 60,000-gallon catchment pond.

The pond features a boulder-strewn waterfall, with aquatic plants to help filter organic matter and suppress algae, as well as fish to control mosquitoes.

Equinox Landscape is helping its clients prepare for inevitable droughts by harvesting and reusing water.

"We don't have a lack of resources," said Patrick Picard, the CEO of Equinox, which he co-founded in 1992. "We poorly manage what resources we have by not having enough catchment."

Picard's rainwater harvesting and greywater systems are changing that.

"Even if we only got 10 inches of rain per year, that's plenty of water, if we catch it," he said.

If catching rainfall is one side of the water conservation coin, the flip side is reusing household water via a grey, or recycled water system.

In Petaluma, the Parsons family already had a laundry-to-landscape greywater system. Equinox installed a second bathroom-to-landscape system that directs water from the Jacuzzi tub, shower and three sinks to an outdoor area planted with fruit trees. Since recycled water isn't needed during the wet season, an actuator switch was installed under the bathtub to easily switch the flow back to the sewer system in the winter.

As Picard can attest, it doesn't take much rain to fill a well-designed catchment system.

He said at the property near Sonoma, every inch of rainfall generates more than 1,560 gallons of water off of the 2,500 square foot barn roof.

Some will be used to water the client's horses. The rest will contribute to the property's overall irrigation system, which is connected to the storage tanks and catchment pond, and provides seamless integration when the summer watering season begins.

The Parsons' rainwater harvesting tanks are also tied to the irrigation system, utilizing a space-efficient design to hide three of the 1,100-plus gallon tanks underneath the backyard deck.