Water at the Painted Fish

Rain water collection

The Painted Fish has two rainwater tanks with a total storage capacity of about 14,000 litres. Given the average Fremantle household uses approximately 280,000 litres per year this may not seem like much, but over winter we can use the water from the tanks over and over as they refill each rainy day. We estimated that last year we collected about 50,000 litres.

We chose galvanised steel tanks with aqua plate lining rather than poly tanks. It seems that the cost, water quality and life expectancy of both types of tanks are similar. Apparently poly tanks use less energy to produce but steel tanks are more recyclable at the end of their useful lives.

Our collection system includes first flush diverters, under gutter outlets, smooth line gutters on an unusually steep angle, and a device called a "Water Boy" which draws water from the mid section of the tank We don't collect water from the studio or carriage roof as the leaves from the Japanese Pepper make doing so impractical.

We use this rainwater for flushing toilets and in the laundry. At Ecoburbia (#21 Hulbert Street) we have installed underground water tanks and plumbed them through the whole house – come down and check them out!

Grey Water Recycling

We are still searching for a seriously usable grey water recycling system. Current WA legislation prohibits the use of treated grey water for flushing toilets, laundry use, etc and restricts the use in the garden to ornamentals and fruit trees. Some vegetables can be watered using subsurface irrigation although it is not encouraged.

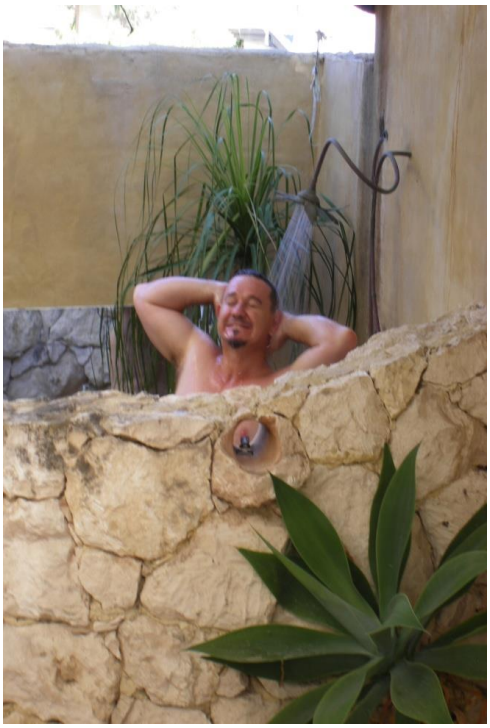
Although we have a good supply of grey water at The

Painted Fish (think of all the sheets we wash!), our garden is mainly veges or succulents, so it is not practical or particularly useful to recycle our grey water.

We tried to get permission to install a black water treatment system (made by Nova Clear) which would allow us to recycle all our waste water to class A+ and reduce our consumption by 50 – 80%. Unfortunately, although this technology is available and currently being used in Queensland, we haven't been able to get a permit to install the system. Hopefully changes in legislation or technology will allow us to make use of this valuable resource soon. We'll keep you posted!

Meanwhile we have put basins in all the kitchen sinks so guest can choose to recycle the cold water they create when running the tap for dishes, and there is a bucket near the studio shower. We find many of our guests know just what to do!

Outdoor Showers



In the studio and carriage Tim has created outdoor showers. They have three main benefits.

1)The overspray from the showers waters the surrounding garden and in summer creates an additional source of cooling evaporation.

2) They do not need to be cleaned as much as an indoor shower and there is no need for ventilation.

3) They are fun!—it feels great to be out in the garden instead of inside a tiled box.

In addition Tim has created a simple water saving device by placing a small ball valve and hose in the hot water inline. When the hot water is turned on the initial cold water in the line can be used to water surrounding plants before the hot water arrives.

Tim and Shani shower outside all year around—especially refreshing during winter storms! If you are interested in a copper outdoor (or indoor) shower for your place speak to Shani and she'll see if Tim can make one for you.

The Ponds

The ponds at the Painted Fish are beautiful, provide a habitat for frogs and yabbies, and are great for bringing down summer temperatures.—They do however loose more water than we would like over summer.

We have two possible plans to reduce water loss over summer—one involves converting the ponds to aquaponics, the other, turning one into a water tank with a deck over the top. Ask us if you would like to know more.