Harvesting Rainwater

Even though we typically do not have much moisture during July, August and (often) September in the Okanagan Valley, opportunities exist for collecting and dispersing rainfall at other times of the year. If an effective rainfall collection and dispersal system is in place, enough rain falls annually to adequately water turf-free yards for the entire year.

A virtually fail-safe water catchment and conservation system can be achieved by taking a multi-faceted approach.

Five ways to conserve water are shown in the table below*; two of the methods are xeriscape principles, and all offer other benefits as well.

- The least expensive place to store water is in the soil. Contouring involves creating a swale or series of swales (also called bioswales) to collect water and allow it to percolate slowly into the soil.
- Every home has a rainwater collection system built right into it: the roof. Collect the rainwater in a series of water barrels or a rainwater tank. Excess collected water can be redirected into a swale, rain garden, pond or other practical storage system.

METHOD	BENEFITS
Use soil materials with high organic matter content	Holds moisture, adds fertility, stores nutrients, boosts soil life, 'fluffs' soil, sequesters carbon.
Mulch deeply	Slows evaporations, cools soil, adds fertility, boosts soil life, smothers weeds, provides habitat for beneficial insects and microorganisms.
Plant according to water needs	Conserves water, less weed growth, plants survive drought, encourages native plants.
Plant densely	Shades soil, smothers weeds, increases biodiversity, increases yields.
Contour soil	Catches water, directs water where needed, helps plants and soil life survive both wet and dry periods, builds humus, adds visual interest.

RESOURCES
- Gaia's Garden: A Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture by Toby Hemenway (2nd Ed.)
- Introduction to Permaculture by Bill Mollison with Reny Mia Slay
- Rainwater Harvesting for Drylands, Vol. 2 by Brad Lancaster.
- Sustainable Landscaping for Dummies by Owen Dell.
- Numerous websites, blogs and videos.