

take the **plunge**

Design your garden to catch rainfall before the overflow escapes like fugitive water on the lam.



Cil was called black gold long before demand soared and supplies, or at least easy access to them, diminished. Water is clearly more essential than gold. Our bodies aren't 96 percent gold, and alas, we can't trade them in for more water-efficient models. Yet we are offered this precious gift; it drops into our gardens from the sky, and rather than accept it gladly and use it well, we pour it into the gutter and pay good money for a less energizing substitute. This lament was precipitated by our record wet winter. The mountains got buried in snow so deep you could hear the crowing of powder-loving skiers far down slope. In the valleys, rains turned dirt roads to mud bogs, but that's just part of the charm of country living, the earthy aura of adobe-stuccoed pickup trucks headed to the carwash.

Capture rainwater runoff by creating wicks of pumice under flagstones, with native grass growing in the wide seams. The flagstones keep the lightweight pumice from floating when the wicks fill with rain and capture condensation to support the grasses. (Garden design by Santa Fe Permaculture.)

Rain is a gift. Everything seems greener as pore-clogging dust is washed from leaves and readily absorbed nitrogen boosts plant energy. A soaking rain flushes excess, growth-stunting salts away from plant roots, encouraging new root development that then sustains plants when drought returns.

And like yet another *Terminator* sequel, drought will be back with withering vengeance. Nature is generous; she also offers many second chances. Summer rains usually account for much of our annual precipitation. Is your garden designed to catch what falls and keep as much of it as is practical before sending the overflow into storm drains—fugitive water on the lam, headed south of the border? Did the extra rain turn parts of your garden into mires, erode slopes, and otherwise cause problems? Will another invasion of weeds take advantage of the abundance you let slip away?