

# New roofwater calculator aids design plans

Our 20-year-old company, Santa Fe Permaculture, recognized a while back that easily accessible satellite imagery would change the land-development industry forever. In response, we created a new company, PermaDesign, to work in conjunction with Santa Fe Permaculture. Both companies will provide the same ecofriendly landscape-design, -consultation, and -installation services. Santa Fe Permaculture will continue to be geared toward our local area.

The difference will be that our new website, [www.permadesign.com](http://www.permadesign.com), will be able to help anyone in the world with a computer, a landscaping project, and a desire to apply permaculture.

One of the most exciting aspects of our new site is our free and easy-to-use "Roofwater Calculator" available for online use at our PermaDesign website. Here's how to use it:

- 1) Enter your address.
- 2) Zoom in close.
- 3) Sketch the perimeter of your roof[s] (or any impervious surface).

With your last click, an estimated number of gallons will instantly pop up at the bottom-left side of your screen. This shows you how much precipitation could be harvested from that surface in an average year. Here in Santa Fe, a 1,000-square-foot roof sheds about 7,500 gallons annually. Why not consider turning this resource into healthier edibles, bigger shade trees, and more native plants? Seven-thousand, five-hundred gallons is a whole lot of extra biodiversity and sustainability for your local watershed.

Unfortunately, roof runoff is usually considered a "waste" product in our culture. Ever since reasonably clean groundwater, surface water, and municipal-system water became easily accessible, roofwater as well as runoff from roads, parking lots, and other

slopes has been seen as a nuisance to get rid of rather than a resource to collect and redistribute. What is worse is that too often roof runoff results in soil erosion as previously pure stormwater picks up every manner of polluting particulate, which delivers a highly contaminated concoction of mucky gunk downstream.

It doesn't have to be like this. Yes, we're in a drought. Yes, there's global warming. Yes, our forests are burning up and our small, local farmers sometimes struggle. But now, at least we can easily begin to reverse the trend of wasted runoff because we can better visualize the potential of precipitation and with a few clicks of a mouse act to save and effectively use rainwater.

So please mark your calendars. PermaDesign's dotcom is set to launch on Monday, July 9. Try it out, and let us know what you think. Many of you have been important inspirations for us over the years. This new website, we hope, becomes a gift back to you. In addition to the free tool, free short videos, and the free questionnaires that help you ask the right questions for your landscape design projects, we provide a wide variety of consultation options, and we'd be happy to help you with your project no matter where you may be.

At [www.permadesign.com](http://www.permadesign.com), we will also make the Roofwater Calculator easy to share with your friends from out of town, so please do not hesitate to spread the word. Everyone from homeowners, to landscape designers, to real-estate developers is encouraged to explore these new developments in ecological technology.

*Author of Harvest the Rain, Nate Downey started Santa Fe Permaculture in 1992. He co-owns Santa Fe Permaculture Inc. and PermaDesign Inc. with his wife, licensed landscape architect Melissa McDonald.*



**Nate Downey**  
Permaculture in Practice



**Both Santa Fe Permaculture and PermaDesign provide services geared to the local area.**

COURTESY  
CHARLES MANN