



“Currents” June 2020

Take Advantage of Free Water

Central air conditioners produce something other than cool comfort: water, lots of it. Collecting condensate from air conditioning systems is relatively simple and can be implemented in both residential and commercial settings. This additional water source can reduce use of potable water to supply non-potable needs such as landscape irrigation, toilet flushing, gardening, industrial process water, and cooling tower water. Condensate collection is also an amazing water-saving technique for Texas because it is produced in greater quantities during the hot dry summer when water use is highest.

Since dry air holds less heat energy, humidity extraction is a critical part of an efficient air conditioning process. When the air conditioner blower pulls warm household air through the frigid passages of the evaporator coil, the cooling effect causes water vapor to change from a gas to a liquid and collect on the coil. Condensation drips down into a collector pan under the coil and is conveyed through a drain line to a sewer connection or simply to the outside of the building. It is the same process that happens on the outside of a cold beverage glass, but on a much larger scale. During the heat of summer, the average home can produce 200 – 1,000 gallons of condensate water each month.

Capturing condensate from your home air conditioner offers a free and high-quality source of water for landscape irrigation. Just like rainwater collection, you can scale condensate collection to meet your water needs and the size of your collection area. You can connect a hose to the drain of your home air conditioning unit and direct the water to a specific part of your landscaping or simply let the condensate drip into a bucket. Kerrville has several examples of large-scale condensate collection systems, too. The UGRA office at 125 Lehmann Drive in Kerrville has a 3,000-gallon tank to collect condensate from the rooftop air conditioning units. This condensate collection system is part of our EduScape landscape which demonstrates water conservation and stormwater detention practices. Stop by for a self-guided tour today! The Peterson Regional Medical Center collects water from their air handling units and stores up to 90,000 gallons in three tanks. The stored water is used to irrigate the landscape and as an emergency non-potable supply. The facility's units generate about 400,000 gallons of water per year. The Kroc Center collects condensate and diverts it into their 130,000-gallon rainwater catchment system. During peak periods, it creates 2,500 gallons of water daily and is used to water landscaping.

There are a variety of ways to take advantage of this free source of water. Start collecting condensate today! Visit UGRA's website for more information on condensate collection and water conservation: <http://www.ugra.org/major-initiatives/eduscape>

Let's Keep Our River Clean

Tara Bushnoe, Natural Resources Coordinator for UGRA, tbushnoe@ugra.org or (830) 896-5445