

Make your house an Oasis

Living off the grid — producing all of your own electricity and water so that you don't have to rely on utility companies — might seem like an extreme measure. But Pouwel Gelderloos, builder and designer of his own “hybrid house” figured out the benefits of living off the grid without any of the risks. “Power is not the big issue,” he says. “It's water independence.” With just 19 inches of precipitation per year falling on his property in Paradise

Valley, one of his strategies includes rainwater collection. “A water collection tank is relatively easy to install and can cost as little as \$200,” he remarks. For every inch of rainfall, the roof of an average 2,000-square-foot home will collect about 1,250 gallons of water. Another strategy he advocates: Use the climate. “If you live in a sunny area, think about solar panels. In a wind-prone region, consider a wind turbine to supplement your electricity supply.” Passive

solar heating makes use of windows on the south side of your home to heat the inside with the sun. Choosing concrete, brick and stone — materials that absorb and retain heat — to use inside the room will increase the effect.

But again, in Gelderloos' opinion, it's the water independence that matters

most. “Almost everyone in America takes water for granted. Yet it is the most important element for our survival and is critical in making our homes run smoothly and efficiently. Rather than relying on heavily processed city water, or deep wells that need electricity to run the pumps, think about collecting water from your



Oasis Hybrid Home in Paradise Valley, Montana (near Yellowstone Park)

roof,” he suggests. The water can be stored in underground barrels next to the house. Storage capacity will depend on your needs and the amount of monthly rainfall in your area. You'll need to collect enough in the wet months to get you through the dry ones. “Once filtered, the rainwater I use tests cleaner than my well water from 200 feet below the surface,” he states.

Gelderloos also installed a gray water recycling feature that cleans water from showers and taps and reuses it for toilet flushing. This helps greatly reduce the overall amount of fresh water needed to collect. “Don't flush your assets down the toilet,” he laughs. Toilet flushing takes 40%

of a household's water requirements. Install dual-flush toilets, which can save more than a gallon a flush, further cutting the amount of rainwater you'll need to collect — and even Costco sells them now. For more information visit OasisHybridHomes.com. Sourced from an article by Natalie E. Russell and conversation with Pouwel Gelderloos. •



*When It Comes to Paint,
Even Red can be Green!*