

Making Ripples

by Amanda Bancroft

Rain is that most mysterious phenomena that seems to fall in different ways with people. It rains out summer picnics and makes bored children on Saturday afternoons. If you get caught in it, many cultures claim you'll catch cold. Farmers pray for rain to sprinkle their crops with water, one piece of the life puzzle. Rain kisses are romantic. A deluge with a flood is terrifying. To sail a homemade boat in a gutter's rushing river is to be captain of your own adventure. Umbrellas are ubiquitous fortune-tellers: bring them with you and it will be sunny. Forget them and get drenched. Rain showers are common here. Showering in the rain is not.

Recently I've had the pleasure of deepening my relationship with rain by showering in it. From seemingly magical (albeit scientifically explained) droplets falling from the sky, our house is flush with water. The roof and gutters herd those little droplets all the way into our 550 gallon cistern. Plumbing and a pump push that rainwater through a series of filters that remove sediment and bacteria so we can bathe and drink safely. It's easy to grasp the science but difficult to convey the emotion of the life-giving water cycle, from evaporation, condensation and precipitation, combined with the more modern wonders of the household water collection system.

I only shower when it's sunny now (if I want hot water, anyway). Our hot water heater takes enormous amounts of electricity and that is best done at midday with no clouds. The connection to not only the rain, but the sun, is on a certain level frustrating and yet rejuvenating. I get clean on nature's schedule and fit into a cycle of living without messing up or wasting the water supply of future children who live in this region. It's like I'm saying to those kids, every time I shower: Hey, I get that you will need water too, and today I won't make your life as polluted or thirsty as I could otherwise do by showering conventionally. Extend that feeling to practically any other difference you could make.

This emotional end of sustainable living seems rarely discussed. It was a surprise to me when rain showers took on a whole new meaning. Harvesting the rain and recycling it into our greywater garden makes me a part of a loop that never ends, as long as our planet endures. And it's that desire for such environmental endurance that motivates me to try and do good, not do perfect. The emotional rewards are astounding. But I guess you'll have to experience it for yourself to understand the intensity of a simple rain shower...or any other achievement you desire. Pick one and go for it. The results may surprise you, too!

Amanda Bancroft is a writer, artist, and naturalist living in an off-grid tiny house on Kessler Mountain. She and her husband Ryan blog about their adventures and offer tips to those wanting to make a difference at www.MakeRipples.org.