

LESSONS LEARNED LIVING ABOARD

By J A Rogers



Catching Rain

The best way to put an end to water collection problems is to have an adequate rain water catching system. In most cases an efficient way to catch rainwater will meet your water supply needs.

One of the best ways to catch rainwater when at anchor, is to make a shade awning that doubles as a rain catcher. Design the awning to have a tube connected at one or more low points which drain the water down a tube into your tank or some jugs sitting out on deck. When you are spending a lot of time in a peaceful anchorage, this method works fine, because you will have your awning up most of the time, and it is perfect to have it serving the added purpose of catching rain. But such awnings have to be carefully thought out and constructed. And awnings create a lot of windage. In a good blow when most of the rain is coming, you'll often want to get your awning down. If you've ever been in a stormy situation trying to get your awning down while the anchor is dragging, and the only reason you had it up in the first place was to catch rain, you know what I mean!

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Rain can be collected regardless of the wind by strategically installing a small molding on deck to channel the flow of rain into the tank below or into a container on deck. Most lumber companies sell pre-cut wood moldings of various sizes. An eight foot length of very basic 3/4 x 1/2 inch pine will do the job well. First some experimentation will be needed. You can temporarily stick the molding down with a few dabs of silicone to test the water flow. The exact placing of the molding will depend upon the shape of the deck and where you want to direct the flow. Once the optimum position for the molding has been determined, remove the silicone and put a couple of coats of wood preservative on the molding, then paint it with two coats of wood primer and two coats of enamel. Use paintable silicone or acrylic bathtub calk to cement it in place. Masking tape or weights on top will hold the molding in place until the calk cures.

Of course the plumbing for a rain catching system can be very sophisticated with all the necessary tubing and valves to direct the flow hidden below deck or it can be very simple by having the molding direct the flow to a hose on deck which requires no special plumbing and which can be stowed away when not in use. For the simplest method, install the molding so that it directs the flow of rain off the cabin top toward a lower deck and install a funnel connected to a section of regular garden hose there at the point where the water flows off the cabin top

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down onto the lower deck. Some flexible ribbed hose attached to the tip of the funnel will help the flow go around any sharp turns. The lip of the funnel can be attached to the end of the wood molding on the cabin top.

If you direct the initial rain into a container on deck, you can use that water for washing or other purposes even though it might be slightly dirty, and then once the flow becomes cleaner, direct the flow into the tank. A child's inflatable swimming pool works well for collecting the initial flow of rain. It will always be there to collect any rain whether or not anyone is aboard and the excess will flow overboard. When the water is flowing clean enough, you can simply put the hose into your water intake valve on deck. Experiment and adjust the system accordingly and you will be well rewarded.

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