



# Water Harvesting 101 *Media Kit*

Learn How to  
Conserve Scarce  
Water AND Put  
it to Work!

Photographed, Written, and Designed by Martha Retallick



## **NEWS RELEASE: Tackling Drought from an Urban Oasis**

### **Drought Impacts 26.6% of the U.S.: A Story of Water Resilience and Urban Solutions**

**TUCSON, AZ** – The U.S. Drought Monitor notes, “As of May 20, 2025, 26.582% of the U.S. and Puerto Rico and 31.65% of the lower 48 states are in drought.”

Water scarcity is no longer confined to isolated regions; cities across the nation are facing increased pressures to conserve and rethink how to use every drop.

In Tucson, Arizona – a city that averages just 12 inches of rainfall per year – drought isn’t an occasional challenge; it’s a way of life. Yet even in this arid environment, award-winning documentary photographer Martha Retallick has transformed her home into a thriving, water-efficient urban oasis.

When Retallick bought her home in 2004, the yard was barren – crushed rock in the front and invasive Bermuda grass in the back. Two decades later, her property showcases lush, sustainable landscaping, all without relying on municipal irrigation.

**- more -**



The secret? A combination of passive and active water harvesting techniques that cities and homeowners across the country can learn from.

"Drought affects all of us," Retallick says. "Whether you're in the deserts of Arizona, the plains of the Midwest, or urban centers like Los Angeles and Atlanta, water resilience starts at home."

Her methods offer practical and affordable solutions for cities and communities nationwide:

- **Passive Water Harvesting:** Sculpting the land with basins, berms, and drainage swales to channel rainwater toward plants and away from structures. These earthworks eliminate the need for irrigation connected to municipal water systems.
- **Active Water Harvesting:** Retallick installed a 1,500-gallon rainwater cistern to irrigate her vegetable garden and a greywater harvesting system that diverts wastewater from her laundry to nourish fruit trees.

These techniques not only create beautiful, water-efficient landscapes but also reduce dependency on limited water supplies – a critical need for cities facing drought and water scarcity.

- more -



Retallick's journey is captured in her new book, *Water Harvesting 101*, a 20-year story of transforming her Tucson home into a model of sustainability. The book serves as a guide for homeowners, urban planners, and community leaders seeking real-world solutions to drought.

Complimentary media copies of *Water Harvesting 101* are available, and Martha Retallick is open for interviews to discuss water harvesting, sustainable landscaping, and how these solutions can be applied nationwide to address the ongoing water crisis.

**To schedule an interview or request media copies of *Water Harvesting 101*, please contact:**

Martha Retallick

520-690-1888

[info@westernskycommunications.com](mailto:info@westernskycommunications.com)

**About Martha Retallick:** She is an award-winning documentary photographer and sustainability advocate based in Tucson, Arizona. With two decades of experience in water harvesting and urban landscaping, her work inspires communities to build resilience in the face of water scarcity.

- 30 -



## **FAST FACTS: *Water Harvesting 101***

**Full Title:** *Water Harvesting 101: Learn How to Conserve Scarce Water AND Put It to Work!*

**Author, Photographer, and Designer:** Martha Retallick

**Publisher:** Western Sky Communications

**Publication Date:** April 15, 2025

**Page Count:** 72

**Dimensions:** 8.5" x 11" (landscape)

**Illustrated:** With author's photographs

**Retail Prices:** \$7.95 audiobook | \$7.95 eBook

**ISBN:** 979-8-9868577-1-8 (eBook) | 979-8-9868577-2-5 (audiobook)

**Book Website:** <https://WaterHarvesting101Book.com>

**Podcast Website:** <https://WaterHarvesting101.com>



## **BOOK DESCRIPTION: *Water Harvesting 101***

**The Problem:** The U.S. Drought Monitor notes, “As of May 20, 2025, 26.582% of the U.S. and Puerto Rico and 31.65% of the lower 48 states are in drought.”

**The Solution:** Passive and active water harvesting techniques that readers can learn and quickly put to work to maximize this precious resource.

In Tucson, Arizona – a city that averages just 12 inches of rainfall per year – drought isn’t an occasional challenge. It’s a way of life.

Yet even in this arid environment, Martha Retallick has transformed her home into a thriving, water-efficient oasis.

When Retallick bought her home in 2004, the yard was barren – crushed rock in the front and invasive Bermuda grass in the back. Two decades later, her property showcases lush, sustainable landscaping – all without relying on irrigation.

Retallick’s secret? A combination of passive and active water harvesting techniques that are easy to learn – and put to work.



## **Water harvesting consists of three activities:**

1. Redirecting rainwater away from where it isn't wanted to where it is.
2. Storing rainwater for later use, for example, during a drought.
3. Recycling "used" water. At Retallick's home, she doesn't let laundry water go down the drain. Instead, it's for the fruit trees.

## ***Water Harvesting 101* introduces:**

**Passive Water Harvesting:** This is the act of sculpting the land with basins, berms, and drainage swales.

The goal? To channel rainwater toward plants and away from structures – like houses and other structures.

Passive water-harvesting earthworks eliminate the need for landscape irrigation connected to municipal water systems. In arid regions, that spells substantial cost savings.

**Active Water Harvesting:** Want fresh garden produce when it's 105 degrees? And it hasn't rained in six weeks? At Retallick's home, the 1,500-gallon rainwater harvesting cistern makes year 'round gardening possible.



And, on wash day, Retallick doesn't let the wastewater go down the drain. Instead, she uses a greywater harvesting system that effortlessly diverts that wastewater from the laundry to her fruit trees – two pomegranates, a fig, and a Meyer lemon. The photo below shows this system in action.

*Water Harvesting 101* is the sequel to Retallick's coffee table book, [City Nature](#). The *City Nature* book is now available as an [audiobook](#).







## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Martha Retallick is an award-winning photographer, writer, and designer who earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics from the University of Michigan and has done additional coursework in graphic design and in building and construction technologies at Pima Community College.

Retallick has freelanced as a commercial photographer, web and graphic designer, and business consultant. She has also worked on the editorial staffs of three different publications.

As a fine art photographer, Retallick has hosted her own solo photography exhibitions and has been included in group shows at Tucson's Raices Taller 222 Art Gallery & Workshop and the Tohono Chul botanical garden.

*Author photo © 2022 Julius Schlosburg.*



## **POTENTIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: Martha Retallick**

1. What led you to write the book?
2. Exactly what is water harvesting?
3. Why is water harvesting so important?
4. Can you explain some easy ways for people to harvest water?
5. What can your average citizen do to avoid wasting water?



# *Meet the Family*

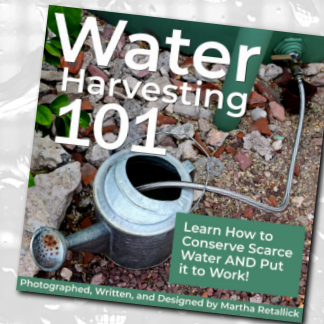
Start your water harvesting journey with a coffee table book that's chock-full of inspiration! *City Nature*, by award-winning documentary photographer Martha Retallick, reveals her secrets to water harvesting through her 20-year journey of transforming her Tucson home into an urban oasis.

Kirkus Reviews *calls City Nature "A beguiling ramble full of captivating DIY information and arresting visuals of flora and fauna."*



**Buy Now!**

Now that you're inspired, it's time to get to work! Meet *City Nature*'s very talkative cousin, the one with the dusty work boots. *Water Harvesting 101* is an audiobook and eBook combination that will teach you the nuts and bolts of water harvesting and show you how to put them to work at your place.



**Buy Now!**

**About the Author:** Although Martha Retallick writes from the perspective of an Arizona desert dweller, where droughts are a way of life, she was born and raised in Pennsylvania. Half of her childhood was spent in a house in the woods. That led to one of her first decisions as a first-time homeowner in Tucson. She didn't want the stereotypical desert landscape that emphasizes gravel, rocks, and cactus. Instead, she wanted trees – yes, *plural*. However, her slender budget couldn't support an irrigation system. So, she planted trees, shrubs, and, yes, some cactus. The goal? A landscape that can live off infrequent rainfall, and, for more than 20 years, it's done just that.