

WATER



You must have water to live – simple but true. In very hot weather, you would survive only a few days without water. Even in cool weather, you could not live long without it. Do not try to ration water. Drink when thirsty.

Rainwater

Be ready to take advantage of rainfall. You can quickly gouge out a hole in the ground and line it with plastic to catch rainwater. Hollow tree stumps might contain water and hollow places in boulders will hold water after a rain.

Straining & Dew

When you need water, don't be finicky. You can strain water from mud using a bandanna or your shirt. You can squeeze water from the pulp of a barrel cactus. You can mop dew from leaves and rocks with a cloth and wring it out into your mouth. Indeed, if you tie cloth to your legs and walk through an area wet with dew, you can obtain a lot of water quickly.

Boiling & Treating

If you have access to water, it should be treated before drinking. If you have iodine tablets or a filter this can be effective. If not, you will need to boil it. Boil water for 1 minute at sea level, adding 1 minute for each additional 300 meters above sea level, or boil for 10 minutes no matter where you are. At Denver's altitude, boiling for 5-6 minutes should be adequate.

If you have water, but no way of treating it and are suffering from extreme thirst, go ahead and drink. Better to suffer and survive an intestinal disorder than to die from dehydration.

Still Construction

Above Ground Still

To make the aboveground still, you need a sunny slope on which to place the still, a clear plastic bag, green leafy vegetation, and a small rock (Figure 6-6). To make the still--

- Fill the bag with air by turning the opening into the breeze or by "scooping" air into the bag.
- Fill the plastic bag half to three-fourths full of green leafy vegetation. Be sure to remove all hard sticks or sharp spines that might puncture the bag.
- CAUTION - Do not use poisonous vegetation. It will provide poisonous liquid.
- Place a small rock or similar item in the bag.

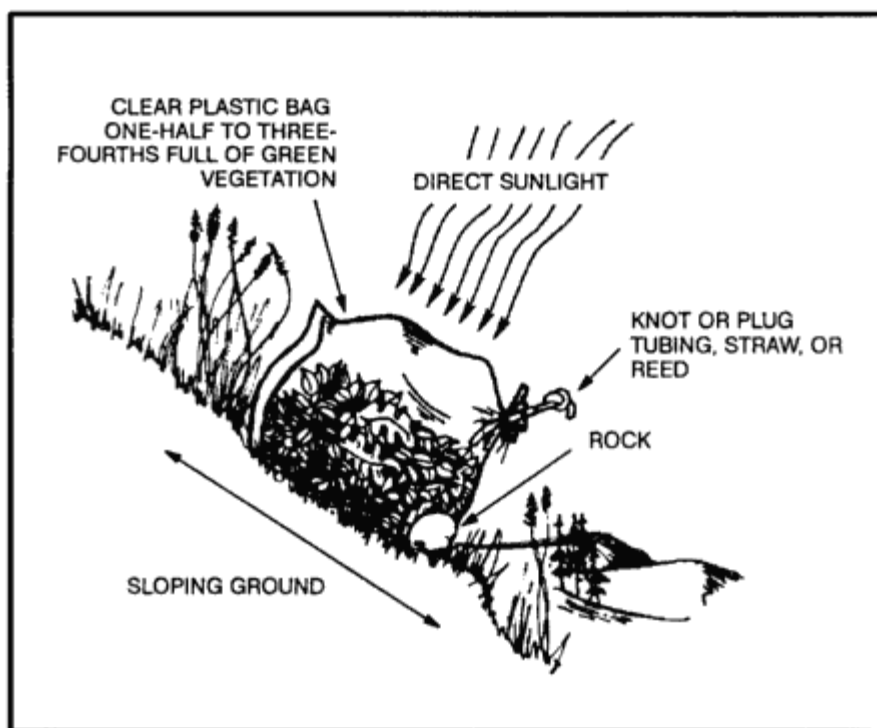


Figure 6-6. Aboveground solar water still.

- Close the bag and tie the mouth securely as close to the end of the bag as possible to keep the maximum amount of air space. If you have a piece of tubing, a small straw, or a hollow reed, insert one end in the mouth of the bag before you tie it securely. Then tie off or plug the tubing so that air will not escape. This tubing will allow you to drain out condensed water without untying the bag. Place the bag, mouth downhill, on a slope in full sunlight. Position the mouth of the bag slightly higher than the low point in the bag.
- Settle the bag in place so that the rock works itself into the low point in the bag.

To get the condensed water from the still, loosen the tie around the bag's mouth and tip the bag so that the water collected around the rock will drain out. Then retie the mouth securely and reposition the still to allow further condensation.

Change the vegetation in the bag after extracting most of the water from it. This will ensure maximum output of water.

Below Ground Still

To make a below ground still, you need a digging tool, a container, a clear plastic sheet, a drinking tube, and a rock (Figure 6-7).

Select a site where you believe the soil will contain moisture (such as a dry stream bed or a low spot where rainwater has collected). The soil at this site should be easy to dig, and sunlight must hit the site most of the day. To construct the still--

- Dig a bowl-shaped hole about 1 meter across and 60 centimeters deep. Dig a sump in the center of the hole. The sump's depth and perimeter will depend on the size of the container that you have to place in it. The bottom of the sump should allow the container to stand upright.
- Place the container upright in the sump.
- Place the plastic sheet over the hole, covering its edges with soil to hold it in place. Place a rock in the center of the plastic sheet.
- Lower the plastic sheet into the hole until it is about 40

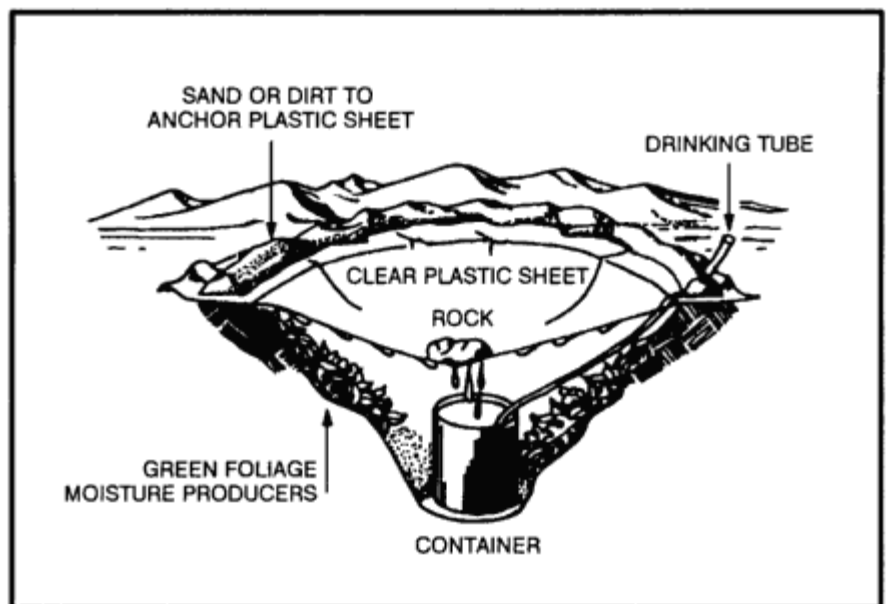


Figure 6-7. Belowground still.

- centimeters below ground level. It now forms an inverted cone with the rock at its apex. Make sure that the cone's apex is directly over your container. Also make sure the plastic cone does not touch the sides of the hole because the earth will absorb the condensed water.
- Put more soil on the edges of the plastic to hold it securely in place and to prevent the loss of moisture.
- You can add a tube from which to drink water without disturbing the still by using the tube as a straw.