

Critical Water

Water is the most essential item: There have been a few times in my life when I have gone three or four days without food, but only once did I go twenty-four hours without a drop of water (or any other fluid). From that experience, I can honestly say that I would rather be four days without a bite of food than a single 24-hour period without water.

Not only must you have water, but it must be safe. There are countless water-borne diseases you keep for the rest of your life, and many of them will make sure that that will not be very long. Boiling is good.

At the most primitive levels hauling and, storing are your only options. Without motorized transportation, the quantities involved would be small. Needless to say, this makes gardening more of a challenge, but nobody said this was going to be easy.

This translates into an important priority at the outset of your adventure: Make sure you can guarantee yourself a supply of water.

Once the initial needs are addressed, you can plan further:

- Search the area for abandoned wells or surface water, and move if necessary.
- A shallow well might be drilled through creative use of available tools and hardware.
- There are various ways you can pump water from shallow wells and cisterns.
- Large clean trash bags can make it possible to store water in an otherwise unsuitable trash can – or even a wire mesh.
- People have survived by using simple solar stills.

I have seen places in a couple of countries where potable water was hauled in a truck, and each home had a plastic container of about 300 gallons where the purchased water was stored. There are good points to this system in that people are far more aware of how much water they use, and within limits, they can budget the usage to their incomes. In the event of a natural disaster, most would have a little water stored that they could live on for awhile. On a low budget, it might be more practical for a developing village to piece-meal the storage of water in among the household-sized tanks than to accumulate funds for a community-scale reservoir.

On the other hand, this makes the village quite precarious: Whoever controls the water truck can potentially control the village. If the truck failed, or the supplier wanted to triple the price of water, if gasoline became unavailable, or if somebody wanted to shut down the town, there would be a serious problem.

