For passive rainwater harvesting systems some of the components shown are optional but are recommended to minimize maintenance. Likewise there are other components that can be added to further improve the effectiveness and life expectancy of your system. Remember that water is heavy so make sure that the base below the cistern is flat, level, and has a compacted surface of sand, gravel, or concrete.

When deciding on material for your cistern consider aesthetics, cost, size, and life expectancy. Make sure to spend some time researching the many possibilities for design and use of your system so that you get the system that fits your needs, lifestyle and pocketbook. And don't be afraid to go big. Our recommendation is to size the cistern to catch at least 2" of rain in order to take advantage of the larger rains that Austin receives.

Calculation to determine size in gallons of cistern needed: AREA DRAINING TO DOWNSPOUT (SQFT) X RAIN TO CAPTURE (INCHES) X 0.6533 (CONVERSION FACTOR)