Many rainwater harvesters advocate diverting the first portion of rain events. The devices used can be labelled "First Flush" devices or "Roof Washers."

The primary principle of that theory is that some contaminants on the collection surfaces are discarded, and if that is true, that the quality of the water harvested would be greater than without the diversion.

Another possible attribute of diverting the first portion of each rain event could be simply the delay.

Is part of the value of a first flush device that it delays collection until some of the airborne contaminants have been grounded?

First flush is great in principle especially in places where rainfall is plentiful. However, in the desert Southwest and southern Rocky Mountains, where many people use rainwater collection not out of choice but rather out of necessity, even drop and every gallon counts. From personal experience I've found simple cartridge filters work just fine in keeping particulates out of the system as long as they are maintained regularly. I have been unable to convince customers and/or other installers in my area to install first flush systems and have not done so for my own rainwater catchment systems, which I have used for 17 years as my primary water source for all uses, including potable.