

Introduction to Rain Barrels

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What Are Rain Barrels and Why Should I Use One?

A rain barrel is a container that collects and stores rainwater from downspouts and rooftops for future use. The collected water can be used to water plants, gardens, trees, cleaning garden tools, and even washing your car!

While you can go purchase a ready-made rain barrel, you can build your own for relatively little expense. Generally, a rain barrel is made using a 55-gallon drum, a vinyl garden hose PVC couplings, a screen grate to remove debris and keep insects out, and other materials found at most hardware stores.

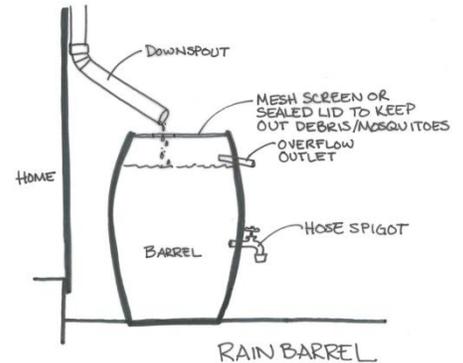
Rain barrels can be constructed in a number of ways, but they all serve the same purpose – to collect rainwater and decrease the amount of stormwater runoff that leaves your property.

They irrigate your lawn and garden

During the summer months, it is estimated that nearly 40% of household water is used for lawn and garden maintenance. A rain barrel can collect and store water for those times that you need it most – during the dry summer months. Using a rain barrel potentially helps homeowners lower water bills, while also improving the vitality of plants, flowers, trees, and lawns.

Rain is naturally soft and devoid of minerals, chlorine, fluoride, and other potentially harmful chemicals. The chemicals and hard water from a municipal water system can add chemical imbalances in soil and damage sensitive plants. Water collected from the roofs of houses picks up very little contamination or pollutants and is very healthy for plant life.

While a rain barrel will not completely capture all stormwater runoff from your property, it is, to some degree, assisting in reducing peak runoff and volume. Additionally, it will take some time to recoup the cost of utilizing a rain barrel, but the purpose of using it is more than just saving money. Water is essentially available to us at any time on demand. However, we may experience times when we should be conserving water as much as possible. In these conditions, a rain barrel or two will certainly help in the larger picture.



Rain barrel diagram



Pre-made, but you can build one inexpensively

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Maintenance and Winter Care



Avoid damaging your rain barrel!

Algae: If you notice algae growth inside the barrel, add 3/4 cup of bleach to inhibit growth. Wait 2 days to use water.

Mosquitoes: The screen will help prevent most mosquito problems, but if needed, you can add a mosquito dunk to your barrel or use vegetable oil. The oil will coat the top of the water, making it difficult to impossible for the mosquitoes to lay their eggs.

Trash: Debris such as leaves and asphalt should not enter the barrel due to the filter. However, sediment will; periodically rinse the barrel to remove sediment.

Winter Weather: Empty your barrel and disconnect from your downspout to avoid cracks and other damage. Save your gutter pieces that were cut so you can re-attach them when the barrel has been winterized.

Tips for Rain Barrel Use

- You can link multiple rain barrels using a small hose to attach them at the overflow adapter.
- Do not use collected water for drinking, cooking, or bathing, it is non-potable.
- Keep lid secure so children and pets cannot fall in and ensure that all other openings are secure to help prevent mosquitos from entering the barrel.
- Ensure the barrel you are using did not contain any toxic materials in its previous use.
- When using the overflow valve, make sure water drains away from your structure and does not flow onto pavement, sidewalks or neighboring properties.
- Paint or decorate your rain barrel to make it a distinct part of your yard or garden!



Decorate yours and make it unique