

Conserve water with rain barrels



What is a rain barrel?

A rain barrel is a container that collects and stores rainwater from downspouts and rooftops for future use watering lawns and gardens. 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 storm water runoff that leaves your property. Using rain barrels is one way to decrease your household's impact on local waterways and to become a good steward of the local watershed.

Why use rain barrels?

They irrigate your lawn and garden

During the summer months a large percent of household water is used for lawn and garden maintenance. A rain barrel collects water and stores it for those times that you need it most — during the dry summer months. Using rain barrels potentially helps homeowners lower water bills, while also improving the vitality of plants, flowers, trees, and lawns.

Use native plants to increase water infiltration and decrease time consuming maintenance.

Rain is naturally soft and devoid of minerals, chlorine, fluoride, and other harmful chemicals. The chemicals and hard water from tap water systems can add to chemical imbalances in soil and damage sensitive plants.

Water collected from the roofs of houses picks up very little contamination, and is very healthy for plant life.

A wonderful way to complement your rain barrel and increase your property's ability to absorb runoff is through a rain garden.

How to build a Rain Barrel

Getting Started

Generally a rain barrel consists of three main components: a barrel, a top hole, an upper drain, and a lower drain.

- **Plastic 55-gallon drums** are the recommended type of barrel to use for safely collecting water with minimal leaking.
- A **top hole** should be cut in the top of the barrel for collecting water. Insert a skimmer basket like those found in garden ponds and swimming pools to filter out leaves and other debris. It is important to cover the basket with fiber glass window screen to prevent mosquitoes and other disease-carrying insects from entering the barrel.
- The **top drain** is a plastic faucet that should always be left in the "open" position to keep the barrel from overflowing.
- The **bottom drain** is a plastic faucet that attaches to a hose for watering lawns and gardens. This faucet should be kept in the "closed" position when not in use.



Tools

- 7/8" spade drill bit
- Electric jigsaw
- Electric drill
- Utility knife
- Marker

Supplies

- 1 - 55-gallon plastic barrel
- 2 - 3/4" plastic faucets
- 1 - 3/4" female coupling
- 1 - Skimmer basket
- 1 - Roll of teflon tape
- 1 - All purpose caulk or plumbing sealant
- 1 - 5-ft. section of garden hose

- 4 - Hose couplers
- 1 - 12" x 12" piece of fiberglass window screen

Top Hole

- Use basket to trace template on barrel
- Pre-drill small hole using 1" spade bit
- Make sure to drill inside the line
- Use a jigsaw to cut out hole following the inside line

Upper Drain

- Mark holes at least two inches from top of barrel
- Use 1" drill bit to drill hole
- Screw plastic faucet into hole
- Use utility knife as needed to alter hole
- Wrap $\frac{3}{4}$ " coupling threads in Teflon tape and caulk and screw onto faucet inside the barrel

Bottom Drain

- Mark holes at least two inches from bottom of barrel
- Use 1" drill bit to drill hole
- Screw plastic faucet into hole. Use utility knife, as needed, to increase hole size
- Remove faucet, wrap threads in tape, caulk threads, replace faucet
- Caulk area where faucet and barrel meet to reduce leakage

Attaching Hoses

- Cut 2' section of hose
- Push each end of hose into a hose coupler and tighten screws
- Screw 3' section onto top outflow faucet and 2" section to bottom faucet

Final Steps

- Build a base to elevate the rain barrel
- Adjust downspout to flow into rain barrel
- Always keep overflow valve open