

What is a Rain Barrel?

A rain barrel is a simple rainwater collector that captures and stores a portion of runoff from roof downspouts. A rain barrel is a way to capture a small fraction of the rainwater that flows off your roof for non-potable, exterior uses, such as irrigation for gardens and flowers.

Why Rain Barrels?

Rain barrels reduce storm water runoff

Rain barrels save on water bills

Rain barrels provide healthy, chemical free water for use on lawns, gardens and trees



It is fairly easy to make a rain barrel with just a few basic supplies from the local hardware store.

~ 55 to 90 gallon food grade plastic barrels can be found online or at local restaurant suppliers, nurseries, or gardening supply stores.

~ We used a 10x10x6 plant basket from the local home improvement center as our strainer basket to keep debris out of the rain barrel.

~ And a spigot



We started by cutting a hole in the top of our barrel the same size as the inside diameter of our plant basket so it will set down in the hole but not fall through.

The top of the barrel needs to be as sealed as possible to keep mosquitoes from nesting in the barrel; to accomplish this we used the original caps/plug for the barrel to seal the two spouts and wrapped the top of our basket with window screening. We used a rubber band to secure the screening around the basket; you can also use nylon hosiery stretched over the basket as a mosquitoes barrier. The basket will help collect any debris that may make it through the screen. You can remove the basket to clean inside your barrel and to fully drain the barrel for winter storage.



Next we drilled a hole, about 3 inches from the bottom of the barrel to place our spigot and sealed around the spigot with indoor/outdoor silicone. Then we drilled a hole near the top on the side of the barrel to serve as our overflow outlet and sealed with silicone. You need to determine where you want to set your barrel and where you plan to drain overflow to before drilling this hole. Picture shows attaching a hose to the overflow valve.

The picture on the next page shows the down spout has been disconnected and a flexible downspout piece is being installed and directed into the rain barrel. You can connect a second barrel to collect overflow, or you can connect a hose or soaker hose to the overflow valve. Be sure your overflow drains to a safe discharge location. If you use hose simply position the hose where you would like run off to go and wait for the rain! To prevent algae growth in your barrel, do not let water remain in your barrel more than 5-7 days.



Note the landscaping rocks at the bottom. You can use concrete blocks, or decorative landscape rocks to set your barrel on. Remember to build a sturdy raised platform to set your barrel on if you plan to fill buckets under your barrel! The higher you can place your barrel the more water pressure you can get from the hose. Be sure to secure your barrel on firm, level surface. A full 55 gallon barrel weighs over 400 lbs. and tipping is a risk if it's on uneven or unstable surface.

You can paint your barrel with left over house paint so it blends into the exterior of the house, be sure to use a primer and a sealing top coat. You can get creative and paint you barrel with designs; make it look like a flower pot, white trellis with ivy growing up it, a picket fence, a bush, just about anything you can think of. To the right is a rain barrel custom made by the second graders at Appanoose Elementary.



It only takes about half an inch of rain to fill a 55 gallon barrel, if your downspouts serves 300 square feet of roof! For every inch of rain that falls on a catchment area of 1,000 square feet you can expect to collect about 600 gallons of water in your rain barrel. Ideally you should have a rain barrel for each downspout of your home.