

Rain Barrel Fact Sheet

A rain barrel is placed under a gutter's downspout next to a house to collect rain water from the roof.



The barrel holds about 50 gallons of water which can then be used to water your garden and for other uses. Harvesting rain water has many benefits including saving water, saving money on your water bill, and preventing basement flooding. By collecting rain water homeowners are also helping to reduce flooding and pollution in local rivers and streams. When rain water runs off of hard surfaces like rooftops, roadways, parking lots, and compacted lawns it carries with it pollution to our rivers and lakes. Harvesting rain water in a rain barrel is just one of the ways homeowners can reduce rain water from coming off their property and causing pollution and flooding problems. See below for other things homeowners can do at home.

Rain barrels cost over \$100 dollars at garden stores but they are very easy and inexpensive to construct. The Earth Center rain barrel was constructed using a recycled food grade barrel. All materials (the spigot, overflow hose adaptor, and fiberglass window screen) were bought at a local hardware store. The screen at the top is a food colander that we covered in mosquito screen. In total the retrofit costs were approximately \$15.00.

The rain barrel is fitted with an overflow hose adaptor so that when the barrel fills up, the water overflows on the side of the barrel. A hose can be hooked up to the overflow so that when the barrel fills up the overflow water can drain to a garden or lawn area.

FAQ

What defense will my Rain Barrel have against mosquitoes?

A mosquito-proof screen on the lid of the barrel helps to prevent the intrusion of mosquitoes and other insects

My roof is small, is it even worth it for me to have a rain barrel?

For an 800 square foot roof area, in a 1 inch rain storm, 500 gallons of water will come off your roof. If all the neighbors install a rain barrel it can have a significant impact on flooding and pollution within your community.

Are there any other ways I can decorate/disguise my barrel?

Home centers and hardware stores carry spray paints that are specifically made for plastic. You can construct an enclosure for the barrel, or hide it among bushes/shrubs to make it less noticeable. You can also make the barrel blend in with your landscape by placing a trellis around your barrel and guide vine plants along the structure.

What can I do with the rain water I harvest?

The water collected can be used to water your flowers, lawn, shrubs and trees. You could rinse hands/feet, tools, or muddy shoes too.

What precautions should be taken?

Always keep the lid to your barrel tightly secured to avoid any accidents involving children or animals. Please do not ever consume water collected in barrel! Also, do not collect rain water if you have used a moss-killer on your roof.

What else can I do to save water and prevent pollution and flooding?

1. To save water:
 - a. Use mulch around your plants to reduce watering needs.
 - b. Install low flow showerheads, faucet aerators, low flow toilets and other water saving devices at home.
 - c. Plant native plants that require less water and less fertilizer than exotic ornamental plants.

2. To prevent pollution and flooding
 - a. Redirect downspouts to areas where the water can soak into the ground.
 - b. Install a rain garden on your property to capture rain water before it goes in to the storm drain system and to our lakes and rivers.
 - c. Reduce the amount of hard surfaces on your property. Use gravel, mulch or pervious pavers to help infiltrate water into the ground.