



RAIN

Why Stop that
Water Drop?

BARRELS

What exactly is a rain barrel?

A rain barrel is designed to capture and store rainwater. Rain barrels can be constructed of any non-disintegrating material such as wood or plastic and are typically 50-60 gallons.

Out with the old, in with the new

- Harvesting rain water is nothing new!
- Families have been doing so for hundreds of years.
- Remember cisterns?!

Why Rain Barrels?

- Water is a limited resource
- As a very urbanized and industrialized society, we continue to consume and waste water resources
- Reduce water bills
- Simple and affordable

Natural Rain Water is...

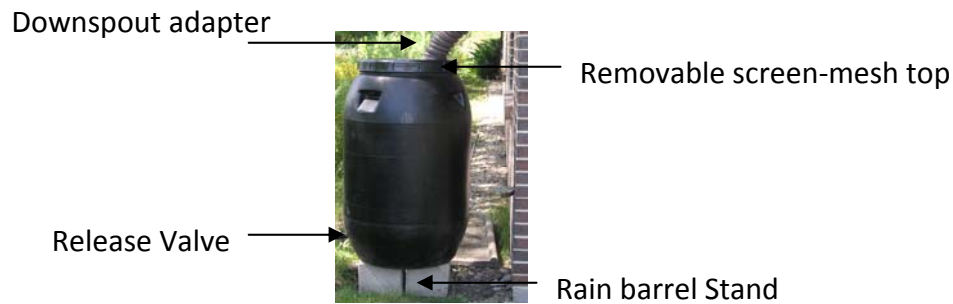
Naturally free of chlorine and fluoride and helps recharge water supplies when used on local plants.

The benefits of harvesting rain water...

- ◆ Rain water is free of additives such as chlorine and fluoride that is typically found in tap water and is oxygenated.
- ◆ Plants prefer water that is free of additives.
- ◆ Rain water is slightly more acidic, which enables plants to more easily access soil nutrients.
- ◆ Rain barrels also intercept and store stormwater runoff that would otherwise strain creeks, streams and rivers.
- ◆ The substantial amount of water that is harvested and used at a later time can significantly lower water bills.

Stormwater Runoff Reduction

- ◆ One of the most important benefits of harvesting rain water is by reducing stormwater runoff that would otherwise carry pollutants and sediment to nearby creeks, streams or rivers.
- ◆ When rain falls to land, it washes pollutants and sediment off of parking lots, agricultural fields, construction sites and lawns.
- ◆ As it travels over the surface, rain carries contaminants until it reaches the nearest water source.
- ◆ With the increase of impervious surfaces in our towns and cities, more water rapidly runs over these hard surfaces rather than infiltrating into the ground and becoming filtered by soil and vegetation.



Screen Mesh Top (Removable)

Keeps out mosquitoes and debris

Overflow Valve (not pictured)

Directs excess water away from home foundation when tank is full

Release Valve

Releases water; located at bottom of barrel

Downspout Adapter:

Aids in the diversion of water from the gutter to the barrel.

TIP: Can also use a gutter elbow rather than a downspout adapter to aid in the diversion of water from the gutter to the barrel

Barrel Connector:

Connects two barrels so that water can flow from one barrel to the next for additional storage.

Rain Barrel Stand

- Use a level and secure base
- When full, barrels will weigh close to 400 pounds.
- Recommend concrete blocks or wooden planks
- Could also use a tree stump

A typical rain barrel is between 50 to 55 gallons which will fill completely up after a ½ inch rain event.

Rain will spill over the top if not released through the downspout which is why it is important to place the barrel on a pervious surface to allow water to percolate into the ground if necessary or use a barrel connector to transfer water from one barrel to the next for additional storage.

Determining whether a rain barrel is right for you requires some consideration.

- ◆ Most rain barrels cost \$80 to \$130 and can be purchased preassembled, as a do-it-yourself kit or can be furnished from homemade materials lying around your house.
- ◆ Pre-assembled kits are usually more costly than do-it-yourself kits.
- ◆ How much space do you have available?

- ◆ Is there space to allow the barrel to drain?
- ◆ Keep away from foundations, siding and other house fixture to prevent water damage.
- ◆ Some people have more intense landscaping than others and would require more than one barrel to accommodate their water needs.
- ◆ Rain barrels should be regularly maintained to prevent mosquitoes from breeding or algae from forming inside of the barrel.
- ◆ Ensure that small children do not consider the barrel a toy.

Do you have the time or ability to maintain the barrel?

What can I use the rain water for?

- Connect to a soaker hose
- Fill watering cans and hand-water landscaping
- Keep compost bins moist
- Rinse off gardening tools
- Washing hair
- Washing the car
- Washing pets
- Fill birdbaths

Water that is collected is not potable unless treated and should not be used as drinking water.

Consider the material of your roof...

...some treated shakes, copper or asphalt can affect water quality.

If your roof is made of wood shingles or shakes that have been treated with any chemical (usually chromated copper arsenate-CCA) to make them resistant to rot and moss, lichen and algae growth, don't water your plants from a rain barrel.

Water collected from copper roofs or copper gutters also should not be used. Zinc (galvanized metal) anti-moss strips-usually mounted at the roof peak-also produce toxic chemicals you don't want in your garden.

Can I use rain water on my vegetable garden?

Yes, but...

Water on the roof *may* contain bacteria and other disease-causing organisms from birds droppings or other animal waste (squirrels, raccoons) so you never want to directly consume something that has been in contact with water from inside a rain barrel.

Use a soaker application rather than a broadcast application to ensure soil filtration.

How to paint a rain barrel

To paint a rain barrel a solid color, Krylon's Fusion Spray paints are recommended as they are designed for plastic and do not require a primer.

To paint designs, first prime the barrel with Zinser 1-2-3 (blue can) and follow with a coat of interior or exterior grade acrylic paint. Finally, paint your designs with acrylics.

Winter Maintenance

- * Disconnect downspouts prior to the first hard freeze.
- * Return downspout systems to original configurations or extend away from building foundations.
- * Drain the rain barrel and turn it upside down to prevent freezing and cracking.
- * Store hoses and mesh screens.

Efficiency

- Harvesting systems are not 100% accurate.
- Typically, efficiency is at 70-90% efficient.
- Water lost to gutter spillage, wind or evaporation

Simple maintenance steps

- Periodically check to make sure that the barrel is functioning properly.
- Empty the barrel in advance of a big storm to create more storage
- Clean the barrel once a year with ¼ cup bleach (natural solution: 2 tsp vinegar or lemon juice) per gallon of water

TIP: Consider growing a vine around the barrel to camouflage the barrel.
(chicken wire can hold the vine in place).

Why rain barrels?

- One of a kind gift (especially for gardeners!)
- It's the gift that keeps on giving
- Save money on utility bills
- They can be painted to suite one's personality

The Winnebago Co. SWCD's rain barrels...

- Have previously been used to ship food products like pickles and olives and have been *recycled* into rain barrels.