

RAIN BARRELS

What is a Rain Barrel?

A rain barrel is a container used to collect and store rainwater from your roof that would otherwise be lost to runoff and diverted to a storm drain or out onto your property. The water in the rain barrel can then be used for watering your landscape.

Typically a rain barrel is constructed from a 55 gallon drum, a vinyl hose, PVC couplings, a screen grate to keep debris and insects out. A rain barrel is easy to construct and can sit conveniently under any residential gutter down spout.

Why use a Rain Barrel?

When you collect rain water that would otherwise enter the storm sewers, you are helping to minimize the amount of storm water that will directly runoff into streams. Why is this important? Every time it rains, unabsorbed water rushes to storm drains and directly into our local waterways. Often times this runoff carries with it pollutants it has picked up along the way, including pesticides, fertilizers, pet waste and automotive fluids.

Collecting Water

Believe it or not, for every inch of rain that falls on a catchment area of 1,000 square feet, you can expect to collect approximately 600 gallons of rainwater. Ten inches of rain falling on a 1,000 square foot catchment area will generate about **6,000 gallons** of rainwater!

Getting Started

Because there are many different ways to set up a rain barrel, we recommend doing some research first so you can decide the best way to install your barrel to most effectively meet your needs. Below are some helpful tips to get you started.

1. Be sure to create a level and secure foundation for your barrel. Raising up the barrel on pavers or blocks create more water pressure for your hose and better access for a watering can.
2. Direct your downspout into the top of the barrel, either through a screen provided or a hole cut into the barrel. Creating a "closed system" with a screen or lid will prevent mosquitoes from breeding.
3. Make a plan for handling excess rainwater by either installing a downspout diverter, which will divert the surplus water back into your downspout or an overflow valve. Several options for an overflow valve include connecting to a garden hose, another barrel or a hose that drains onto your yard.

Tips for using your Rain Barrel:

Depending on the barrel you use, installation may have a few special concerns. Here are a few general tips and recommendations:

- Do not use collected water for drinking, cooking or bathing.
- If a moss killer has been used on the roof, let a few rainfalls occur before collecting the roof runoff.
- The screen will prevent mosquitoes from breeding in your barrel. If you see a problem with mosquito breeding consider using mosquito dunks.
- Consider joining multiple barrels for additional capacity!
- Disconnect the barrel during the winter to avoid freezing and breaking of the barrel and its valves. Drain the system and connecting hoses by leaving the drain of the barrel open or turn the barrel over to Drain. Store the barrel with hoses in a protected area.

- Use caution when using a rain barrel around children or pets. Be sure the barrel is on level ground so that a child could not knock it over. Also, make sure the top is covered by a screen or lid, so no one is tempted to climb inside.

Purchase or Construct?

Ultimately, that decision is up to you. A constructed rain barrel can cost somewhere between \$75-\$150. You can find barrels for sale, online and at some garden centers. You can also purchase a rain barrel from your local Soil and Water office. Here in Stark County you can reach our Soil and Water office at 330-830-7700 ext 103.

If you decide to construct your own, there are many online resources. Plans can be easily found online to fit your specific needs, some are very easy they require few supplies and others are quite involved.

When searching for a barrel to make your own, either look for a brand new barrel or if it has previously been used make sure it is considered "food grade". You want to make sure the barrel did not contain chemicals that could be dangerous to you or your garden. Whether you choose to purchase a prefabricated barrel or construct one yourself, soon you will be reaping the benefits from your barrel!

