

Interested in simple, inexpensive ways to reduce your business' impact on the environment? Would you like to receive credit and publicity for your pollution prevention activities? Read on! If you like what you read, contact Steve Saari at (301) 984-1908x103 or ssaari@icprb.org for more information, or to set up a free and confidential evaluation of your business' property.

Rain Barrels: Saving You Money and Helping the Anacostia

A rainstorm in a natural environments soaks slowly into the earth, nourishing both plants and animals. However, in an urban environment, the flow of water created by a rainstorm - storm water runoff - can be polluted by oil, chemicals, pesticides, and sediments built up on our lawns, driveways, streets, and parking lots. Rain washes these pollutants into storm drains and ultimately into local streams and rivers.

Your business can help reduce pollution created by storm water runoff by installing rain barrels to your building's down spouts.

What is a rain barrel?

A rain barrel is a system that collects and stores rain water from your roof that would otherwise be lost to runoff and diverted to storm drains, streams and the Anacostia River. Composed of a large drum, a vinyl hose, PVC couplings, a screen grate to keep debris and insects out, and other off-the-shelf items, a rain barrel is relatively simple and inexpensive to construct and can sit conveniently under any business gutter down spout.

What are the advantages of a rain barrel?

In some areas of the D.C. Metropolitan Area, sewer systems combine sewage waste with storm water in the same pipes. Because of population growth since this sewer system was installed, the D.C.



sewers sometimes overflow during rainstorms. That means sewage gets dumped, untreated, into the Anacostia and the Potomac Rivers.

Using a barrel to catch the water flowing from gutters is one of the simplest and

cheapest ways to divert water from the sewer system.

Furthermore, rain barrels help conserve water and reduce demand at water and wastewater treatment facilities. Rain barrels can help reduce this demand by collecting water and storing it for when you need it most: during periods of drought. It provides a good supply of free 'soft water' to your business, containing no chlorine, lime or calcium making it ideal for grass, flower beds, and car and window washing.

If this all seems like a lot of work for a little water, remember that one inch of rain falling on 1,000 square feet of roof adds up to 623 gallons! Obviously one rain barrel will not be able to catch

all that water, but every little bit helps! And using a rain barrel not only helps protect the environment, it saves you money and energy through decreased demand for treated tap water.

How Can I purchase a ready-made rain barrel?

Ready-made rain barrels can be purchased from numerous companies. Below are just a few (Listing does not constitute an endorsement by the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin or the ARBC):

D&P Industries Incorporated (DPI) produces the Urban Rain Barrel. (503) 286-9866.
<http://www.therainbarrel.com/index.html>

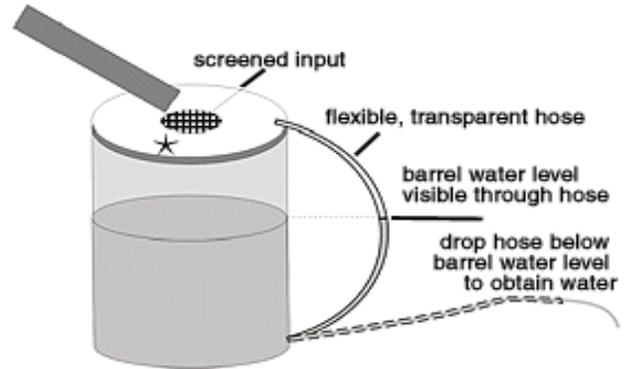
Spruce Creek Company produces the Spruce Creek Rainsaver. 1-800-940-0187.
<http://www.sprucecreekrainsaver.com>

How do I build a simple rain barrel?

Building your own rain barrel is relatively easy, relatively inexpensive and hassle free (about \$15.00 to build). All of the following materials can be purchased at your local home improvement center or hardware store. For instructions on how to build a rain barrel, visit the ARBC web site at www.arbc-info.org or the Maryland Green Building Website: www.dnr.state.md.us/smartgrowth/greenbuilding/rainbarrel.html

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: - Don't rain barrels attract a lot of mosquitoes?



A: - No. Correctly constructed rain barrels have a screen that allows water in, but keeps mosquitoes out.

Q: - How much does a rain barrel cost?

A: - A rain barrel can cost as little as \$15 for materials to build one yourself or as much as \$100 for a ready-made barrel.

Q: - Can I use any barrel to make a rain barrel?

A: - No. Only food grade barrels should be used in order to ensure that the water you save will not be contaminated.

Q: - If I use a rain barrel am I really making a difference?

A: - One rain barrel will save around 1,300 gallons of water during the summer. That's equivalent to flushing the toilet 520 times!

Information provided by Maryland DNR Green Building Program.

ANACOSTIA RIVER BUSINESS COALITION UPDATE

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