

What if there has been plenty of rain? Do I still need a rain barrel?

Yes! It is always good to spare our wells the additional strain of outdoor watering or trim a few dollars from the water bill. The world supply of water is very limited, and as our population grows, so does demand. We also know that droughts are a constant threat. It is best to make water conservation a lifestyle choice all the time.

I use a lot of containers and hanging baskets, but do not have a large garden. Is it worth it for me to install a rain barrel?

Absolutely! Containers dry out very quickly, and even if there is rain every day, containers and hanging baskets usually do not get thoroughly wet without additional watering. Rain water is still the best source and with a rain barrel, your patio plants and hanging baskets will look their best all summer long. Your houseplants will love it too!

How do rain barrels help manage stormwater runoff?

When it rains, roof tops act as large funnels, channeling hundreds of gallons of water through gutters, downspouts onto driveways and into the street. As the water travels, it picks up oils, dirt and other pollutants and dumps them into streams, rivers and eventually the Chesapeake Bay. Storm water also causes river banks to erode which leads to loss of habitat for native plants and animals. By channeling downspouts into rain barrels, rainwater can be stored for later

use. Excess water can be allowed to percolate into the soil on your property rather than run off into the storm system.

How much rain can I collect from my roof?

Every inch of rain that falls on 1000 square feet yields 623 gallons of water. Amazingly, just 1/8 inch of rainfall on a moderately sized 750 square foot roof will fill a 60-gallon rain barrel. Even a quick thunderstorm or passing shower can result in a full barrel giving you the water you need when you need it.

1. Calculate the square footage of roof area used to catch rainfall (length x width).
2. Multiply by 623, then divide by 1000
3. Multiply by inches of rainfall
4. Obtain yield in gallons

How do I modify my downspout to divert water to the barrel?

Basically, you will need to cut a small section out of the existing downspout and install a flexible elbow using three short machine screws (elbow cost \$2 at most home improvement stores.) The elbow is accordion shaped and will easily extend out from the downspout into the lid of the barrel. Once the barrel is full or winter weather arrives, the flexible elbow can be reinserted into the lower downspout for normal function. The only tools needed to install the flexible elbow will be a tape measure, hacksaw and screwdriver.

What kind of foundation does the barrel need?

A 60-gallon rain barrel weighs 500 pounds when full. It is important to put the barrel on a firm, level foundation of concrete pavers. Elevate the barrel 18-inches or so and it will be easy to place a bucket or watering can under the spigot. Make sure to secure the barrel to prevent tipping and never allow children to play with or around the barrel.

With the threat of West Nile Virus, I am concerned about mosquitoes. How can I keep them from breeding in the barrel?

Open containers of standing water allow mosquitoes to breed. Those same containers also pose a drowning hazard to children and animals. By keeping a secure lid and screen assembly on the rain barrel, and all fittings attached, mosquitoes will be unable to breed in the collected water. *NEVER use an open container to collect and store rainwater.*

Why not use a trash can to collect and hold rainwater?

Even the highest quality trash cans are not designed to hold water, and often warp and split under the weight of the water. More importantly, a trash can full of water poses a very real drowning hazard. Their lids are not secure and can be easily pried open by a raccoon or a child.

When the lid is replaced with screen to keep out mosquitoes, a screen cannot hold

much weight even if secured with rope or wire.

The safest approach is to use containers for their intended purpose! Use trash cans for dry waste and select a rain barrel designed for storing liquid.

What can I use the collected water for?

Rainwater is ideal for plants, both indoor and out because it does not contain dissolved minerals or added chemicals. Rainwater is ideal for many other non-potable uses as well.

What should I do with the rain barrel during the winter months?

During the winter months, always drain and store the rain barrel empty. Either store it indoors or turn it upside down so it cannot collect water. A full barrel can split from the pressure of ice if allowed to fill and freeze. Also, be sure to return your downspout to its normal operation.

What features should I look for in a rain barrel?

Whether you make your own rain barrel or you purchase one ready-made, pay careful attention to the design. A well-designed rain barrel made with quality parts will be easy to use and provide years of service.

- *NEVER use a barrel for rainwater collection unless it is a food grade container designed to hold liquids and you are absolutely certain of its history!*
- For safety, select a barrel with a rigid, fully-screened lid that will keep

mosquitoes out and guard against drowning.

- Select a barrel with an overflow at least a 1½ inch diameter to manage excess water when the barrel is full. The barrel should also be able to link with additional barrels to increase capacity of collected water.
- Choose a barrel with a heavy-duty brass spigot installed near the bottom to access all of the collected water.
- Opt for a barrel that uses threaded compression fittings that tighten without a need for sealants. Fittings installed with silicone or other sealants will eventually leak and drain the barrel.
- Select a barrel made of heavy duty, UV-stable dark plastic. This plastic will not break down in sunlight and will not allow algae to grow in the collected water. Algae is unsightly and will clog the spigot.

RainBear rain barrels are available at:

Ingalls Lumber & Supply
203 East Main Street
Middletown, MD 21769

Contact: Jennifer Dotson, Interstate
Commission on the Potomac River
Basin, 301.984.1908 x 109

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RAINWATER HARVESTING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why save rainwater when there is no drought?

How can a rain barrel help manage stormwater runoff?

Don't rain barrels breed mosquitoes?

How do I get started?



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