

# RAIN BARRELS

## Save the Rain for a Sunny Day!

### WHAT IS A RAIN BARREL?

A rain barrel is a container used to collect and store rainwater that would otherwise be lost to runoff and likely diverted to a storm drain. Collected water may then be used to water lawns and gardens. Rainwater can be harvested in many ways. The catchment system described here is just one way to capture rainwater for use in your yard.

### WHY USE A RAIN BARREL?

- 💧 **WATER CONSERVATION** - Approximately 60% of our municipal water supply goes directly to watering our lawns. By using rain barrels, you lessen the amount of water flowing into our storm drains, sewer systems, and ultimately local waterways. This free source of water can then be used during hot or dry spells to water your garden.
- 💧 **PROTECTION OF LOCAL WATERSHEDS** - 70 million pounds of pesticides are applied to lawns each year, contaminating stormwater (rainwater) runoff. Fertilizers and pesticides are the primary source of water pollution. By collecting rainwater, you prevent that runoff from picking up and carrying these harmful pollutants into our local waterways.
- 💧 **NATURAL GARDENING** - Using rainwater to water your garden is natural and healthy. Plants and beneficial microbes like rainwater because it is naturally soft and free of chlorine, fluoride, and other chemicals.



### RAIN BARREL FAQ's

- 💧 **Will my rain barrel attract mosquitoes? NO!** This type of rain barrel is a closed water system and there is no standing water in which mosquitoes can breed. Open catchment systems may require frequent monitoring and treatment.
- 💧 **Can I add a second (or third...) barrel to the same system? YES!** Simply drill a hole at the bottom of your first barrel and at the bottom of your second barrel. Thread each hole with the pipe tap, wrap the ends of the hose barbs with Teflon tape and insert into the holes. Connect the bottom of the barrels with a small hose, making sure the connection is taut and secure. You can hook up as many barrels as you like and harvest all the rainwater you like!
- 💧 **Can I paint my barrel? YES!** There are several paint types that will adhere to plastic. Ask at your local hardware store. We recommend roughing up your barrel with sandpaper before you paint no matter what paint you use. It helps the paint adhere better to the plastic barrel.
- 💧 **Can I drink the water from my rain barrel? NO!** The water that falls into your barrel is not potable for humans or animals. Rainwater runs over your roof and down your downspout - only plants and grass like this water.
- 💧 **Can I put a rain barrel on my house or garage? Check with your local city hall to see if they have any restrictions about cutting your downspout. With this diverter system, once the barrel fills up, the water goes back into the downspout. Be sure to tell them that you are diverting rainwater, not disconnecting your downspout.**

# HOW DO I MAKE AND INSTALL A RAIN BARREL?

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You will need the following supplies. Keep in mind that you can borrow a drill, bit/hole saw, and a pipe tap from a friend, as these items are expensive. Barrels can be found at recycling centers or at container retailers, but make sure they are food-grade barrels and cleaned thoroughly. We get our barrels from Container Compliance 216/961-0035. They charge \$20-25 for barrels (blue, white or terracotta) and the barrels are power washed.

## **Supplies:**

55 gallon barrel  
15/16" drill bit or 1" hole saw and a drill  
Needle-nose pliers  
3/4" pipe tap  
3/4" male spigot (boiler drain)  
3/4" thread (male) to 1/2" hose connection hose barb  
Teflon tape

## **Instructions:**

With a drill bit or hole saw, drill a hole about 2" from the bottom of barrel for the spigot (boiler drain). Drill a second hole near the top of the barrel for the hose barb (keep in mind which side you want the hole on to connect to the diverter from the downspout). You can also drill the hole for the hose barb on the top of the barrel. If you are using a hole saw, remove plastic after drilling hole with needle-nose pliers, as plastic will be hot to the touch. Thread both holes with the pipe tap. Wrap threaded ends of spigot and hose barb with Teflon tape and insert into appropriate holes.

You will need to elevate your rain barrel. The higher you put it, the better water pressure you will get from it and you can fill a watering can underneath the spigot. Concrete blocks or bricks work well to elevate a rain barrel. Be sure the rain barrel is on solid ground as you will not want to move it once it is full. A filled rain barrel weighs over 400 lbs. If your rain barrel is on soil, put gravel down to stabilize the ground before adding concrete blocks or bricks to elevate your barrel.

## **Downspout Diverter:**

There are several different diverters you can use to get the water from your downspout over to your barrel. The one we use is from a local company, Garden Watersaver - [www.gardenwatersaver.com](http://www.gardenwatersaver.com).



## **Maintenance:**

In the winter, empty out and store your rain barrel in a basement, garage, or ideally somewhere temperature controlled. If you don't have a place to store it, you can leave it outside, just be sure to turn it upside down. The diverter from Garden Watersaver can stay on your downspout and be plugged with the plug provided in the kit.

Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District sells rain barrels at workshops held across Cuyahoga County. Check our website for workshop dates.

**[www.cuyahogaswcd.org/programs/rain-barrels](http://www.cuyahogaswcd.org/programs/rain-barrels)**

Encourage your neighbors and friends to install rain barrels! We are all a part of conservation!

# Harvest Rainwater