

FACT SHEET: RAIN BARRELS

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Here's an interesting statistic: 1 inch of rain on a 1,000 ft² roof can produce approximately 625 gallons of rainwater. Imagine being able to capture even a small portion of that to use on your plants!

A rain barrel, also known as an "urban cistern", is a convenient way to catch and store 55 gallons of rainwater to use for general outdoor purposes – watering your plants, washing your car, rinsing off gardening tools, etc. There are many advantages to setting up a rain barrel (or two) on your property:

- By capturing rainwater off the roof, you help reduce the amount of stormwater runoff (and accompanying pollution) going back into our surface water bodies.
- Placing a rain barrel at the corner of the house can help reduce soil erosion and settling of water near the foundation.
- Using rainwater for watering plants and other outdoor chores reduces the strain on our existing potable (treated) drinking water.

Rain barrels may be ordered through garden catalogs or off the Internet, but they can cost upwards of \$100. A more cost efficient option is to find a local barrel supplier (check the Yellow Pages under "Barrels & Drums") and purchase a 55-gallon, recycled plastic, food-grade drum. It's best to get one with a removable lid, but it is not necessary. Here are the other supplies you will need:

- Drill (cordless or electric)
- 15/16" paddle drill bit
- 3/4" male-treaded spigot (aka boiler drain)
- PVC Cement
- 2' x 2' piece of window/patio screen
- 4 cement blocks
- Mild bleach solution (1/4-cup bleach mixed with 5 gallons water)
- Flexible plastic downspout tube (optional)

DIRECTIONS:

1. Rinse out the inside of the barrel with the mild bleach solution. Pour water out in a lawn or mulched area.
2. Drill a 15/16" hole on one side of the barrel, approximately 4" to 6" from the base of the barrel.
3. Screw in the 3/4" spigot half-way. Apply PVC cement around the exposed threading and finish screwing in the spigot until it is flush with the surface of the barrel.
4. Remove lid from barrel. Place a 2' x 2' piece of window/patio screen across the opening and secure in place with the rim of the lid or bungee cords.
5. Identify a location for the barrel. Make the ground surface as level as possible. Lay 2 cement blocks next to each other on the ground. Lay 2 more cement blocks on top of the previous two.
6. Set rain barrel on top of cement block platform. Check that everything is still level.
7. If you have gutters and downspouts, redirect an existing downspout to empty just above the screen into the barrel. If no downspouts, position the barrel under a part of the roof that sheds a lot of water when it rains.



You can create a simple overflow by drilling another 15/16" hole near the top of the barrel and inserting another 3/4" spigot. Attach a short garden hose to the spigot and leave it open. Direct the overflow water to another part of your yard, away from the foundation of the house.