

Rain Barrels

Rain barrels – a new concept for water conservation? No way! The idea of capturing rainwater in cisterns is generations old. Landowners have used cisterns as a way to collect water for water gardens, plants, washing clothes and even drinking.

A rain barrel is a rainwater harvesting system that is connected to a downspout from a house or building. The average U.S. household uses 146,000 gallons of water per year with up to 50 % of that water going towards landscaping during the summer months. By collecting rainwater, one can save energy, water, and money –as much as \$600 a year. Rain barrels also help reduce erosion and stormwater runoff and increase water quality.

How do I set up a rain barrel system at my house, school or office? The public has two main options – 1) purchase pre-made rain barrels through your local garden store or through an online source; or, 2) create your own. The following are instructions for creating your own barrel.

Step 1 – Purchase the following materials from your local hardware store:

- new sturdy trash can (you can also use 55 gallon food grade plastic drum – check your local yellow pages under barrels for a dealer)
- tube of sealant/adhesive caulk
- mesh screen
- mosquito brick
- ½ inch faucet
- downspout flex elbow
- 3 bricks
- optional: 1 inch plug



Step 2 – Drill three holes - two holes near the top of the trashcan/barrel for overflow and one 6 inches from the bottom.

The drilled hole should be the same size as your faucet opening (for a ½ inch faucet use a 7/16 drill). With the barrel, it is recommended you drill a fourth hole at the very bottom to drain the barrel.

Step 3 – Screw the faucet into the opening and secure with sealant/adhesive on both sides.

Step 4 – In the trash can cover, cut 6x6 inch opening (the hole can be either circular or a square). Cover the opening with mesh screen, secure using the sealant/adhesive caulk.

Step 4A – If you are using a 55-gallon drum, cut an opening that is approximately 1/3 the size of top in the top. Cover the opening with mesh screen, secure using the sealant/adhesive caulk.

Step 5 – Cut two pieces of mesh screen slightly larger than 1 inch each. Using the sealant/adhesive caulk, attach the mesh screen to the overflow hole drilled at the top of the barrel/trash can. (If you drilled a fourth hole on the bottom, put the plug in it.)

Step 6 – Attach the trash can cover to the can.

Step 7 – Place the rain barrel on 3 bricks next to the downspout you wish to capture the water from. (This is so you can put a bucket/water pail under the faucet.)

Step 8 – Cut the downspout to just above the rain barrel.

Step 9 – Attach the downspout flex elbow to the downspout.

Step 10 - Slide the rain barrel under the spout lining up the mesh screen opening with the flex elbow. Spray water on the roof and check to make sure the rain barrel and mesh opening are in the right location.

Step 11 – Add a mosquito brick monthly and enjoy your new barrel.

Step 12 – Optional: paint your rainbarrel using Krylon Fusion paint. Available at most hardware stores and online at Aarons rainbarrels.



Aaron's Rain Barrels, 2004

Resources for additional information:

Rainwater Harvesting, Energy Technical Bulletin 27, Southface Energy Institute, www.southface.org/web/resources&services/publications/factsheets/27_rainwater-recovery-v2.pdf 11/8/04

Rain Barrel Information and Sources, *Saving for a Sunny Day: Rain Barrels in the Garden* <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/PI/rainbarrels.htm> 11/10/04

Aarons' Rain Barrel FAQ's www.ne-design.net/rain-barrel-faq.html 11/8/04

Harvest the Rain--Right from Your Roof, *Kathy LaLiberte*, Gardener's Supply Company www.gardeners.com/gardening/content.asp?copy_id=5497 11/8/04

Rain Barrel Guide: How to use rain barrels for water collection <http://rainbarrelguide.com/> 11/10/04

Athens-Clarke County Stormwater Program, www.accstormwater.com

To purchase a rainbarrel:

Aaron's RainBarrels www.ne-design.net
Custom made rainbarrels available online.

Gardener's Supply www.gardeners.com
Pre-manufactured rainbarrels and rainbarrel accessories available online or by mail-order catalog.

Watersavers www.watersavers.com
Water conservation products, including pre-manufactured rainbarrels and accessories available online.