

Installing a Rain Barrel

What is a Rain Barrel?

A rain barrel is a waterproof container that collects and stores rainwater from your roof before it flows into a storm drain or natural runoff, where in route it would likely pick up harmful pollutants. Capturing the rain water allows you to manage when and where the runoff is used. Typically rain barrels are used to water lawns and gardens.

Why use a Rain Barrel?

- Rain barrels help to **reduce pollution** by capturing and reusing water that would otherwise be storm water runoff that can pick up pollutants such as oil, fertilizer, and other harmful materials.
- A rain barrel allows you to manage where and when the rainwater is released, therefore **preventing flooding** during heavy rain and permitting watering with stored water during a dry spell.
- A rain barrel can help to **reduce water consumption** and the affiliated costs

About our Rain Barrels

The rain barrels that Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum makes and sells are 55 gallon plastic barrels that have been fitted with a hose spigot near the bottom, an overflow adapter near the top, and a mesh-covered input on the top of the barrel. The barrels we sell are all **reused**, food-grade, plastic barrels.

Installing your Rain Barrel

1. Select a location to install your rain barrel. You will want it to place it near a gutter downspout from your house, garage, or shed.
2. In order to increase the output water pressure and provide for easier use of the spigot near the bottom of the barrel, you may wish to elevate the barrel using securely-placed cinder blocks or 4x4 lumber scraps. Keep in mind that the lower spigot of the barrel must be higher than the highest point you wish to water with the collected rain.
3. Modify your downspout by cutting it with a hacksaw approximately 12" above the top of the barrel. Use the flexible downspout diverter to divert the downspout into the opening on the top of the barrel. Save the cut section of downspout and reinstall in during winter months while your empty barrel is stored in the garage.
4. Secure the 15' hose to the upper spigot and open the spigot. This hose will act as an overflow allowing you to divert the excess water away from the house.
5. Secure a garden hose or soaker hose to the lower spigot and close the spigot until you are ready to water your garden. You can also use your rain barrel without a hose to fill watering cans, fountains, etc.



Supplies Required

- ✓ Garden hose or soaker hose
- ✓ One 15' section of garden hose
- ✓ One 5' flexible downspout diverter
- ✓ Cinder blocks or short lengths of 4x4 lumber

*most supplies are available from a local hardware store

Tips

- ✓ You should store your barrel in the garage during winter months. Be sure to replace the gutter downspout to its original configuration
- ✓ As long as the water collected doesn't remain in the barrel for more than a week or two, mosquitoes shouldn't be a concern.
- ✓ Consider connecting a soaker hose to your barrel for watering flower or garden beds.
- ✓ Paint away!@ Most paint manufacturers offer spray and brush on paints for use on plastics.
- ✓ Does your rain barrel fill up to quickly? Consider adding a 2nd.