

Rain Barrels and Water Quality

Silver Creek Watershed Improvement Project funded by a Nonpoint Source Section 319 Grant from IDEM
Clark County Soil and Water Conservation District



Benefits of a Rain Barrel

- Reduce water pollution in our rivers and lakes by reducing stormwater runoff
- Naturally soft water with no additives to irritate plants.
- Direct overflow water away from building foundations to more desired locations.
- Save money on your water bill.

Safe Use of Your Rain Barrel

If you make your own rain barrel the type of container you use is important. Make sure it's a food-grade container that was made to hold liquid.

Make sure that you place it on level and stable ground. A typical rain barrel will weigh over 500 pounds when full. Concrete blocks or pavers make a good base. They also raise the barrel off the ground, which increase water pressure coming out of the hose.

Monitor the rain barrels for overflow. If you leave for vacation for a week and haven't taken precautions to avoid the overflow of water, you may end up with damage to the foundation of your home or water in your basement.

Why Install a Rain Barrel?

Rain barrels are above ground water storage vessels. They capture rain runoff from a building roof using the gutter and downspout system. Rain happens. Rain is free. Rain barrels can go a long way in offsetting your domestic water needs: including gardening, car washing, trees, indoor plants or pooling topping. Did you know that during a typical rain event (1 inch in 24 hours) more than 700 gallons of water runs off the roof of a typical home? When rain runs off roofs and lands on impervious surfaces, it cannot soak into the ground. Eventually it enters a storm drain or nearby creek. This excess water or runoff causes the soil in its path to erode more rapid than in naturally would. As the runoff crosses surfaces it picks up sediment, pesticides, fertilizers, oil and other pollutants. Rain barrels intercept stormwater and

put it to good use as well as stopping pollutants entering our water bodies.

Rain barrels can be made or purchased. You can spend anywhere from a few dollars to thousands of dollars. One barrel will not hold all the runoff from your roof so you may want to consider a series of rain barrels connected together. All systems should be covered so animals and small children can fall in and drown. A filter to keep out silt and leaves is a good investment.

Do some detective work before you decide where to put your rain barrel. Look closely to see where each downspout is directing water. Place your rain barrel where it will collect rain that would otherwise become destructive stormwater runoff.

It is best not to collect water

from old tar and gravel roofs, old asbestos shingle roofs, or cedar shakes. While this water is fine for watering your garden, trees, lawns or indoor plants, it should never be used to drink or given to animals.



Rain barrels can be painted just remember the paints must be able to withstand climate conditions and be compatible with the barrel material.

Building your Own Rain Barrel

Supplies

- 1 - plastic barrel
- 2 - 3/4 inch plastic faucets
- Roll of Teflon tape
- All purpose caulk or plumbing sealant
- Fiberglass window screen large enough to cover top hole
- 2 - Garden hose to connect to both faucets (length will vary)

Top hole - If barrel doesn't have a hole use a 1" spade bit and a jigsaw to cut a hole the size of the downspout or slightly larger.

Lower Drain - Drill a hole at least 2" from bottom of barrel using a 1" drill. Screw plastic faucet into hole. Remove faucet, wrap threads in Teflon tape, caulk threads, replace faucet. Caulk area where faucet and barrel meet to ensure

no leakage.

Upper Drain - Repeat instructions from lower drain except drill the hole at least 2" from top.

Screen - Cut screen to fit over downspout hole. Affix screen to barrel with caulk/plumbing sealant. Allow to dry completely before using.

Hoses - Place a hose on each faucet the length you need to make them work best for your site.