

Rain Barrels

Rainwater Collection – Background Info

Residential irrigation can account for 40% of domestic water consumption in a given municipality. Rain barrels not only store water, they help decrease demand during the sweltering summer months. Only ¼ inch of rainfall runoff from the average roof will completely fill the typical barrel (1 inch of rain on 1,000 sq. ft. roof yields @600 gallons of water). Collection of water from rooftop runoff can provide an ample supply of this free 'soft water' containing no chlorine, lime, or calcium. Saving water in this manner can reduce your demand for treated tap water and save money by lowering your monthly water bill. Rainwater diversion will also help decrease the burden on water treatment facilities and municipal drainage systems during storms.

Water Quality, Mosquitoes & Debris

Because mosquitoes are present in every state in the union, precautions should be undertaken to minimize infestation. Top side mesh screens or plastic lids will act as a barrier to adult insects but eggs may still drop through. Non-toxic water treatment might be the best proactive approach to pest management (use of Mosquito Dunks is an example of an ecological solution to mosquito control). For enclosed units that are not open to the air, and have water entering through a pipe or tube, mosquito eggs can still enter by traveling in rainwater from the gutters. Again, mosquito dunks can provide an earth friendly solution to mitigate breeding. Keep in mind that with this type of set up, rooftop debris can enter the rain barrel. It is advisable to create or install some type of gutter guard that keeps leaves and pine needles out of the downspout.

Rain Barrel Benefits

- Holds rainwater on site that would normally wash down driveways and hard surfaces to the street and storm sewer (and into our rivers and lakes)
- Decreases the burden on water treatment facilities/municipal drainage systems during storms
- Convenient source of water in areas where water faucets are some distance away (such as on the other side of the house from where you need water)
- Collecting rainwater is a good way to deal with watering restrictions during drought
- Rainwater is oxygenated, unchlorinated, and warmer than tap water (better for plants, especially in containers where salts from tap water build up)

Note: It is important to raise the barrel up on a stand. You can use cement blocks or anything that can handle the weight of the full barrel. You can also buy a stand designed to raise the barrel from several of the companies listed below. This really helps with water pressure, and it enables you to put a watering can directly under the spigot to fill it. It also allows you to tip the barrel a little when it is almost empty to get that last inch or two of water out.

Rain Barrel Sources

www.gardeners.com, Gardener's Supply, 1-800-427-3363, rain barrels 40-150 gallons (for 2 linked barrels) and priced from \$90-\$225. Some completely assembled, assorted accessories for rain barrels and irrigation. Many other interesting and innovative environmental and garden products.

www.composters.com, 1-877-204-7336, 6 different styles, 54-77 gallons, \$99.50-\$135.50, some completely assembled, plus rain barrel accessories

www.sprucecreekrainsaver.com, 1-800-940-0187, 54 gallons, \$130.00, plus recycled rain barrels

www.watersavers.com, 1-877-204-7336, variety of rain barrels and accessories

Aaron's Rain Barrels, (no phone number listed) www.ne-design.net, regular and gutterless rain barrels from 58 gallons