



Why Use a Rain Barrel?

When rain falls in a town or city, it quickly flows into storm sewer systems by flowing over the asphalt, concrete, and roofs of buildings, all surfaces that don't absorb water. The collected water is shunted directly to lakes and streams, taking with it contaminants from the surfaces it traveled over. In contrast, rainwater that falls onto the porous ground is slowly filtered through layers of soil and rock and into ground water aquifers or into streams, rivers and lakes.

Rain Barrels help divert some of this rain water before it makes it into a community's storm water handling system. Rain Barrels are placed directly under eaves and are used to capture the rain that falls onto a roof. By capturing this water, there is less going down the drive and into the stormwater handling system. The water is then available for use when you need it to water your plants and gardens.

Rainwater is oxygenated, unchlorinated and warmer than tap water, qualities that actually make it a better source for plants and safer for the environment.



Rain Barrel Set Up



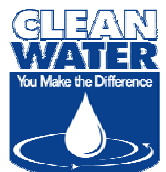
If you use a rain barrel, or if you're planning on it, make sure it's childproof. To be safe for kids, rain barrels need to have a secure lid.

Plastic barrels are used for shipping and storage of nice things like foods, and not-so-nice things like pesticides and heavy-duty detergents. Sometimes, the outside of a barrel will tell you what it contained, but there's no guarantee it hasn't been refilled with something else. Know where your barrel comes from and make sure it's clean.

Setting up a rain barrel is a simple project. (If you rent, you'll want to check with your landlord first, naturally). The downspout of the eaves trough runs from the roof right down to ground level. You'll need to shorten it enough to get the rain barrel underneath the spout. Basic tools like a hammer, a screwdriver or drill, some nails and screws, and a step stool or ladder should do the job if you don't have them, borrow.

Most downspouts are a series of aluminum tubes with tapered ends, tucked one into the other and nailed or screwed onto the building with brackets. Undo these brackets, remove the bottom section (s) of the downspout, then set up your barrel underneath and reattach the downspout to the building. Plastic tubing or flexible piping (at your hardware store) can be attached to the spout to direct water right into the barrel, or even more than one barrel at a time.

Rain barrels can cost as little as \$25 and as much as \$180. A basic plastic barrel made for shipping can be found at a garage sale or road-side barrel sale stand. But again know the past lives of your barrel, before placing the barrel into service.



Useful References:

http://www.cwp.org/Community_Watersheds/brochure.pdf
<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/PI/rainbarrels.htm>
<http://www.skyjuice.us/>
<http://www.rainbarrelguide.com/>
<http://ga.iraibarrel.com/>
<http://www.kalamazooriver.net>
<http://www.raingardens.org>
<http://www.prairiesmoke.com>



How Much Water Can You Collect in Rain Barrels During a Rainfall?

Believe it or not, for every inch of rain that falls on a catchment area of 1,000 square feet, you can expect to collect approximately 600 gallons of rainwater. Ten inches of rain falling on a 1,000 square foot catchment area will generate about 6,000 gallons of rainwater! That's right, 6,000 gallons! More than you were expecting?



This Nonpoint Source Pollution Control project has been funded in part by the Clean Michigan Initiative Clean Water Fund to the Forum for Greater Kalamazoo for the Portage and Arcadia Creeks Implementation Project #2005-9120. The contents of the document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, nor does the mention of grade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendations for use.