

What Are Rain Barrels and Why Should I Use One?

A rain barrel is a container that collects and stores the water from roofs and downspouts for future uses such as watering lawns, gardens, and house plants; cleaning off gardening tools; and washing your car.

Rain barrels help to lower your waer bills, particularly in the summer months by collecting thousands of gallons of free water a year that you don't have to buy.

Rain barrels are also important for our environment because they help reduce water pollution by decreasing the amount of stormwater runoff reaching our lakes and rivers. Thousands of gallons of water run off the roofs of our houses each year. This stormwater picks up dirt, chemicals, fertilizer, and trash and transports it to storm drains that dump directly into our lakes and rivers. Rain barrels play an important role in protecting our water resources by collecting the stormwater.



Important Tips for Using Your Rain Barrel

- Keep lid secure so children, pets, and small animals cannot fall in. Make sure that all other openings are secured to prevent mosquitoes from entering the barrel.
- Make sure the overflow valve drains water away from structures and does not flow onto pavement, sidewalks, or neighboring properties.
- Disconnect the barrel from the downspout and drain it before winter to avoid the formation of damaging ice in the barrel.
- Do not sure collected water for drinking, cooking, or bathing.
- Paint or decorate your rain barrel to make it a distinct part of your yard or garden!

For more information or to purchase a pre-made barrel:

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What Do I Need to Get Started?

All of the following items can be purchased at your local hardware store for a **total cost of around \$30** depending on the type of trash can and brand of fittings you purchase.

- Outdoor trash can with lid (any size will work – the larger, the more water you will collect)
- Downspout flex-elbow
- 6 inch atrium grate
- Sump pump drain hose kit (kit includes: one ¼ inch, 24 ft. hose, and one 1¼ inch insert male adapter)
- 1¼ inch PVC female adapter
- ¾ inch spigot with sillcock
- ¾ inch PVC male adapter (do not get CPVC male adapter)
- Electric drill
- 1 inch drill hole saw (type of drill bit)
- 1½ inch drill hole saw (type of drill bit)
- File
- Silicon caulk
- Plumbing tape (also known as Teflon tape)
- Felt tip pen
- Utility scissors or utility knife
- Hacksaw (for cutting downspout if desired)
- 2-4 Concrete blocks

STEP 1: Trace the outline of the top of the atrium grate (largest circle) on the top of the barrel with a felt tip pen. Next, with utility scissors or a utility knife, cut a hole out of the lid by following the traced line. The hole should be snug enough to allow the atrium grate edge to sit on top of the barrel securely without falling in. This allows water to flow into the barrel and keep debris and animals out.



STEP 2: Drill a 1 inch hole about 1½ to 2 inches from the bottom of the barrel. Leave enough distance between the hole and the barrel's bottom to allow the barrel to sit flat on the ground without the spigot hitting the ground. Insert spigot on outside of barrel. Wrap the ¾ inch PVC male adapter threads with plumbing tape.

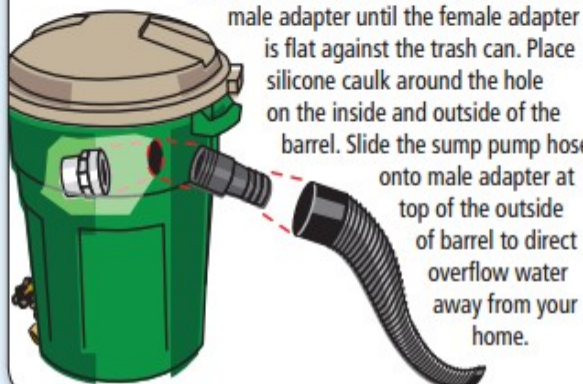


Place the adapter inside the barrel and place the threaded end of the adapter through the hole. Screw together the adapter and spigot so that the spigot is tight against the trash can. Use silicone caulk to seal the hole on the inside and outside of the barrel.

5 Easy Steps to Make a Rain Barrel

These steps serve as a guideline for the construction of your own rain barrel. Changes can be made based on your personal preferences.

STEP 3: Choose the side of the barrel that you want to place your overflow valve, and drill a 1½ inch hole about one to two inches below the top of the barrel. Use your file to enlarge the hole enough to insert the 1¼ inch male adapter from the outside of the hole. Screw together the 1¼ inch female adapter on the inside to the male adapter until the female adapter is flat against the trash can. Place silicone caulk around the hole on the inside and outside of the barrel. Slide the sump pump hose onto male adapter at top of the outside of barrel to direct overflow water away from your home.



STEP 5: Congratulate yourself on your hard work and for making a difference in reducing stormwater pollution. Make sure to let all the caulk dry thoroughly before using. Enjoy your rain barrel!

STEP 4: Place 2 concrete blocks under your selected downspout as a raised base to allow room for a watering can or to screw on a hose. Cut your downspout about 4" above the top of the barrel lid. Attach the downspout flex-elbow to the downspout. Direct the flex-elbow into the atrium grate on top of your trash can.

