



# Rain Barrel

A rain barrel is a system that collects and stores rain water from your roof that would otherwise be lost to runoff and diverted to storm drains and eventually into the Mississippi River. During the peak summer months a rain barrel can collect up to 1,300 gallons of water depending on where you live.

## BEST PRACTICE AREA: SURFACE AND GROUNDWATER

### DID YOU KNOW?

Rain barrels have been used since the dawn of man to collect and store rainwater for use during times of drought.

### IT'S A BIRD! IT'S A PLANE!

No, it's your rain barrel! Don't be turned off from the benefits of a rain barrel by its lackluster appearance. Your rain barrel doesn't have to look like a garbage can. Spice it up! Use your imagination and paint and decorate your barrel however you like. Maybe make it a wine barrel? A fish tank? A snowman? An elephant? The possibilities are only limited by your imagination!

### WON'T THE PRESSURE BE TOO LOW?

One might think that the spigot at the base of the rain barrel will not provide enough pressure to seep through a soaker hose. However, the weight of the water above the spigot will force the water out through the hose. Granted, the water pressure will not be equal to that coming from the spigot on the side of the house, but it will be sufficient to water garden and potted plants or rinse off your car. Keep in mind, as the length of hose gets longer and/or the volume of water in the barrel decreases, the water pressure coming from the hose will diminish.

### WINTER CARE OF YOUR RAIN BARREL

Here in Central Minnesota, the cold and snow can wreak havoc on many things. Don't let the cold and snow affect your rain barrel. While collecting melting snow off your rooftop may seem like a good idea, you could be damaging your rain barrel in the process. It is recommended that you take your rain barrel out of service in the winter months. The cold temperatures could cause the hoses or even the barrel itself to crack. When storing your rain barrel, turn it upside down to allow the barrel to fully drain and also keep it clean for springtime.

### WHY USE A RAIN BARREL?

- Rain barrels will reduce the demand of the local water supply and help lower your water bill and save you money by collecting the water you need for your yard or garden.
- Rain barrels reduce water pollution by reducing storm water runoff, which can contain pollutants like sediment, oil, grease, bacteria, and nutrients.
- Rain barrels are easy to build or readily available to purchase.
- Rain water is great for household plants.
- A Rain barrel will provide plenty of water for car washing without having to pay for water from the hose.

### SETTING UP YOUR RAIN BARREL

- Position your rain barrel under or at an area close to the downspout.
- Keep the rain barrel elevated to allow for easy access to the drain.
- Secure a fine mesh barrier over the opening of the barrel to keep out mosquitoes, animals, children and debris.
- Create an outlet near the top of the barrel as an outlet if the water in the barrel gets too high by cutting a small hole and attaching tubing to divert the overflow away from the building.
- Install a spigot at the base of the barrel by cutting a small hole, installing and sealing a spigot for easy water access and hook-up for a soaker hose.
- Wait for rain!

### CONNECT TWO OR MORE BARRELS

Sometimes it rains more than one barrel can handle. After all, for every inch of rain that falls on your roof, you could catch 0.6 gallons of water. So a 10 x 10 roof area could allow you to connect up to 60 gallons during a 1-inch rain event!

To connect two or more rain barrels together, simply connect the overflow holes on each rain barrel to each other using tubing or PVC pipe. (It might be beneficial to cut an additional overflow hole in each barrel if you live in an area with high volumes of rain.) When the barrel at the downspout fills, it will drain into the second barrel, then the third, and so one, allowing you to capture more and more water.

### MAKE YOUR OWN VS. BUYING

Many home improvement and hardware stores sell pre-made rain barrels. However, constructing your own rain barrel is a simple process and can be done cheaply and easily by even the most novice of handy-persons. Try searching the Internet for plans and styles that fit your needs and your style and start collecting water today!

