

How To Make A Rain Barrel

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ABOUT YOUR BARREL

1. Make sure the area where you place the rain barrel is level; otherwise, the barrel tips over.
2. Secure your barrel with stakes or ties if it is in a windy corner of the yard; if empty, it could blow over.
3. Connect a short piece of hose to the overflow spout at the top of the barrel and direct the hose away from your home's foundation and impermeable surfaces such as the driveway or sidewalk.

Good uses for a rain barrel include:

1. Water garden and flower beds.
 2. Water houseplants – the love it!
 3. Wash mud off tools and boots.
 4. Wash the dog.
 5. Wash the car — rain water is soft so little detergent is needed, again saving you money on washing products. Do not wash the car on the driveway or street; instead, wash your car on the lawn and water your grass at the same time! Washing your car on the driveway or street causes the soapy water to drain untreated directly into local waterways and into the Chesapeake Bay.
 6. Emergency water for flushing toilets if your well water level is low or dry or if you water is temporarily cut off.
- Tip: Do not use rain water for drinking or cooking. — Cris Ausink, Hampton environmental educator

By Kathy Van Mullekom
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The next time there's a rain storm in our area, stand outside in a protected area and look at how much water falls from the roof of your house.

It's buckets and buckets full — water you can put to good use if you have rain barrels catching all those drops.

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation estimates during an average rainstorm, which is 1 inch in 24 hours, more than 700 gallons of water run off the roof of a typical home. That's enough water to take 17 baths or 58 showers and goodness knows how many plants it can benefit.

Rain barrels are typically 50 to 55 gallons so four placed under gutters at the main corners of your home yields about 200 gallons for watering vegetables that you grow this season. You save two ways – buying tomatoes or green peppers at the grocery store and your water bill.

In fact, rain barrels are a win-win garden gadget for everyone, especially our environment.

“Using rain barrels benefits the environment because you reduce sewer runoff, help your garden and landscape thrive, lower your water bill and reduce stress on water supplies,” says Hampton extension agent Megan Ketchum.

Numerous companies sell ready-made rain barrels, but you can quickly craft your own from plastic food-grade barrels sold at places such as GI Joes Military Surplus in York County.

Making a rain barrel at home is easy if you follow a few guidelines, according to Hampton environmental educator Cris Ausink.

“Avoid barrels that held chemicals or wax because the residue in them could kill plants and harm the environment,” she says.

Supplies/tools

- Plastic food grade barrel with tight-fitting lid
- Brass faucet
- ¾-inch male hose adapter, brass

PVC female hose connector
3 washers
2 lock nuts
Small piece of hose
Caulk
Window screen, 3-foot square
Drill with hole saw (1/16 inch smaller than the faucet insert)
Pliers
Hacksaw

Directions

1. Wash the interior of your barrel using a cap full of Mr. Clean or Simple Green mixed with a five-gallon bucket of water; use vinegar to scrap off any exterior labels. Rinse thoroughly.
2. Drill two holes in your barrel, one hole near the top and one hole three to four inches from the bottom. Make each hole 1/16 inch smaller than the faucet and valve you will insert.
3. Install the faucet assembly in the bottom hole. Insert faucet with a washer on it into the barrel and secure with a washer and lock nut from the inside.
4. Install the overflow valve by inserting the 3/4-inch male hose adapter with washer half way through the top hole and attach washer and lock nut from inside. Attach female hose connector to outside with a short hose connected.
5. If your barrel's lid has a solid center, use a key hole saw to cut out the middle; place screen centered on the barrel opening and screw the plastic ring in place to secure it to the barrel.
6. Place your barrel under a gutter downspout; elevate it on bricks or cinder blocks so you can get a bucket under the faucet at the bottom.

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