

RAIN BARRELS

Save the Rain for a Sunny Day!!!

WHAT IS A RAIN BARREL?

A rain barrel is a container used to collect and store rainwater that would otherwise be lost to runoff and likely diverted to a storm drain. Collected water may then be used to water lawns and gardens. Rainwater can be harvested in many ways. The catchment system described here is just one way to capture rainwater for usage in your yard.



WHY USE A RAIN BARREL?

- **WATER CONSERVATION** - Approximately 60% of our municipal water supply goes directly to watering our lawns. By using rain barrels, you lessen the amount of water flowing into our storm drains, sewer systems, and ultimately local waterways. This water can then be used during hot or dry spells to water your garden.
- **PROTECTION OF LOCAL WATERSHEDS** - 70 million pounds of pesticides are applied to lawns each year, contaminating storm water (rainwater) runoff. Fertilizers and pesticides are the primary source of water pollution. By collecting rain water, you prevent that runoff from picking up and carrying these harmful pollutants into our local waterways.
- **NATURAL GARDENING** - Using rainwater to water your garden is natural and healthy. Plants and beneficial microbes like rainwater because it is naturally soft - free of chlorine, fluoride, and other chemicals.

RAIN BARREL FAQ'S

- **Will my rain barrel attract mosquitoes? NO!** This type of rain barrel is a closed water system and there is consequently no standing water in which mosquitoes can breed. Open catchment systems may require frequent monitoring and treatment.
- **Can I add a second (or third...) barrel to the same system? YES!** Simply drill a hole at the bottom of your first barrel and at the bottom of your second barrel. Thread each hole with the pipe tap, wrap the ends of the hose barbs with Teflon tape and insert into the holes. Connect the bottom of the barrels with a small hose, making sure the connection is taut and secure. You can hook up as many barrels as you like and harvest all the rainwater you like!
- **Can I paint my barrel? YES!** There are several paint types that will adhere to plastic. Ask at your local hardware store.
- **Can I drink the water from my rain barrel? NO!** The water that falls into your barrel is not potable for humans or animals. It will have run over your roof and down your downspout - only plants and grass like this water.
- **Can I put a rain barrel on my house or garage? We encourage you to *check with your local city hall to see if they have any restrictions*** about cutting your downspout. Be sure to tell them that you are diverting the rainwater, not disconnecting your downspout. In this system, once the barrel fills up, the water goes back into the downspout.



Claire Posius, Euclid Creek Watershed Coordinator
216-524-6580, ext. 16
www.cuyahogaswcd.org
cposius@cuyahogaswcd.org



HOW DO I MAKE AND INSTALL A RAIN BARREL?

You will need the following supplies. Keep in mind that you can borrow a drill (and bit) and a pipe tap from a friend, as these items are expensive. Barrels can be found at recycling centers or at container retailers, but make sure they are food-grade barrels. We get our barrels from Container Compliance 216/961-0035. They charge \$18 for barrels and are power washed.

Supplies:

55 gallon barrel (make sure it is cleaned thoroughly)
15/16" drill bit, and drill
3/4" pipe tap
3/4" male spigot (boiler drain)
3/4" thread (male) to 1/2" hose connection hose barb
Teflon tape



Instructions:

With a 15/16" drill bit, drill one hole near the bottom of barrel for the spigot (boiler drain). Drill a second hole near the top of the barrel for the hose barb (keep in mind which side you want the hole on to connect to diverter from downspout)

Thread both holes with 3/4" pipe tap

Wrap threaded ends of spigot and hose barb with Teflon tape and insert into appropriate holes

You will need to elevate your rain barrel for several reasons. 1) The higher you put it, the better pressure you will get; 2) putting your rain barrel on stable ground and elevated will prevent it from sinking into the ground, as a filled barrel weighs over 400 lbs. Cinder blocks work well to elevate barrels.

Downspout Diverter:

There are several different diverters you can use to get the water from your downspout over to your barrel. The two we have used are from www.gardenwatersaver.com or www.gardeners.com. Either will work fine.

Maintenance:

In the winter, be sure to empty out and store your rain barrel in a basement, garage, or ideally somewhere temperature controlled. If you don't have a place to store it, you can leave it outside, just be sure to turn it upside down. If you use the diverter from www.gardeners.com, you will need to get a flexible downspout piece to connect the space on your downspout where the diverter was hooked up. These are inexpensive and can be found at any hardware store. If you use the diverter from the www.gardenwatersaver.com, the diverter can stay on your downspout and be plugged with the plug provided.

Please be sure to check out the Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District website as they will be hosting several **Rain Barrel Workshops** in 2009 throughout the County at <http://www.cuyahogaswcd.org>

Encourage your neighbors and friends to install rain barrels!
We are all a part of conservation!!

Harvest Rainwater!!!