

# 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 use in your yard.



*Rain Brothers diverter on a rain barrel*

### 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 free source of 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 stormwater (rainwater) runoff. Fertilizers and pesticides are the primary source of water pollution. By collecting rainwater, 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 and 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 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 (using a 1" hole saw). Thread each hole with a pipe tap if you have one and put a 3/4" thread (male) to 1/2" hose connection hose barb in each hole. Connect the bottom of the barrels with a small hose, making sure the connection is taut and secure. Be sure the barrels are elevated to the same height.
- ◆ **Can I paint my barrel? YES!** There are several paint types that will adhere to plastic. Ask at your local hardware store. We recommend roughing up your barrel with sandpaper before you paint no matter what paint you use. It helps the paint adhere better to the plastic barrel.
- ◆ **Can I drink the water from my rain barrel? NO!** The water that falls into your barrel is not potable for humans or animals. Rainwater runs 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? Check with your local city hall to see if they have any restrictions about cutting your downspout. With this diverter system, once the barrel fills up, the water goes back into the downspout. Be sure to tell them that you are diverting rainwater, not disconnecting your downspout.**

# HOW DO I MAKE AND INSTALL A RAIN BARREL?

The Rain Brothers diverter kit comes with everything you need to build your rain barrel. However, you will need your own drill. If you don't have one, you can borrow one from someone.

Barrels can be found at recycling centers or at container retailers, but make sure they are food-grade barrels and cleaned thoroughly. We get our barrels from Container Compliance but they do not sell barrels to the public.

## **Instructions:**

There are detailed instructions in your diverter kit. Also, you can watch how to make your barrel on YouTube.

[How to Build a Rain Barrel in 5 Minutes / DIY.](#)

You will need to elevate your rain barrel. The higher you put it, the better water pressure you will get from it and you can fill a watering can underneath the spigot. Concrete blocks work well to elevate a rain barrel. Be sure the rain barrel is on solid ground as you will not want to move it once it is full. A filled rain barrel weighs over 400 lbs. If your rain barrel is on soil, put gravel down to stabilize the ground before adding concrete blocks to elevate your barrel.

## **Downspout Diverter:**

There are several different diverters you can use to get the water from your downspout over to your barrel. The one we use is from Rain Brothers. These diverters fit a standard 3" downspout. If you have a 4" downspout, we have a few of those as well. They fit on the side of the downspout instead of on the front.

## **Maintenance:**

In the winter, 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. The diverter from Rain Brothers can stay on your downspout and be covered with the winter cap provided in the kit.

**If you need another kit or replacement parts, please contact Rain Brothers at [www.rainbrothers.com](http://www.rainbrothers.com).**



*Contents of the Rain Brothers diverter kit*

Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District sells rain barrels at workshops held across Cuyahoga County. Check our website for workshop dates.

**[www.cuyahogaswcd.org/programs/rain-barrels](http://www.cuyahogaswcd.org/programs/rain-barrels)**

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

**Harvest Rainwater**

