

Rain Barrel Questions and Answers

Why would I want a rain barrel in my yard?

Rain barrels are primarily used as a water conservation tool, but are also helpful in managing stormwater. Used in conjunction with other stormwater Best Management Practices throughout your neighborhood, they can improve water quality in our rivers. Lawn and garden watering consumes up to 40 percent of your tap water use during summer months. You can significantly reduce this amount by using rainwater instead. The barrel's spigot is threaded so you can attach a garden hose directly to the barrel. Water collected in your barrel can be used for:

- Your garden and lawn
- Washing your car, bike, or pet
- Cleaning work boots and tools
- Watering potted plants. Many gardeners find that plants like rainwater better than tap water.

Is a rain barrel right for my house?

A rain barrel may be a good idea for you if:

1. You can place your barrel underneath a disconnected downspout,
2. The land surrounding the rain barrel slopes away from your house and surrounding homes,
3. The area surrounding the rain barrel has enough pervious (water-absorbing) surface to soak up overflow without causing flooding, and
4. You use the rain water collected often after rains (i.e. weekly).

What is a rain barrel?

The District's 55 gallon rain barrel is a frost proof, durable plastic resin container that collects and stores rainwater from your rooftop (via your home's disconnected downspout) for later use on your lawn or garden, or other outdoor uses.

Will my barrel overflow when it rains?

Probably. A 1,000 square foot roof runs off approximately 310 gallons of water in a half-inch rain. If the roof has 4 downspouts each accepting roughly the same amount of water, 75 gallons will run into one downspout, causing the barrel to overflow by 20 gallons.

What should I do with the overflow?

Make sure overflow does not cause flooding or flow into a neighbor's property. Some options for overflow:

- Connect the overflow to a second rain barrel.
- Ensure there is enough pervious surface around the barrel to soak up overflow. Trees and plants with deep roots are good absorbers. Concrete and asphalt are not.
- Direct overflow back into the sewer with a downspout diverter (available at various other websites on-line).

Rain Barrel

Installation, Maintenance
& Frequently Asked Questions

Managing water – That's what we do!

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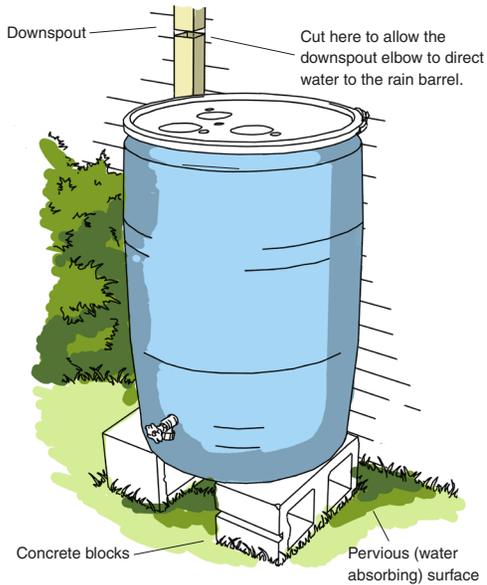
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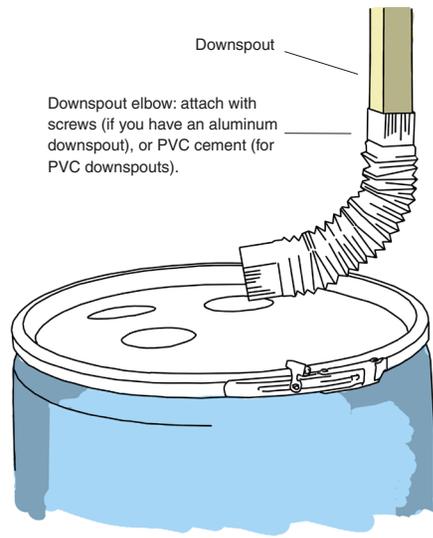
Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago,
Stormwater Management Authority for Cook County, Illinois

Place your rain barrel:



- Next to your house or garage that is close to the plants and garden that you water most. Other downspouts can be disconnected and directed into your yard.
- Where the barrel's overflow will soak your own yard, and not your neighbors' property.
- On a surface that will allow overflow to soak into the ground. Otherwise rain barrel water overflow during heavy rains could pool or seep into your house or garage foundation.
- Up on concrete blocks to help direct water to your garden (gravity propels the water), or so a watering can fits underneath the spigot.

Install your rain barrel



Tools: *Hacksaw.* For aluminum downspouts: *6 screws and a screwdriver.* For PVC downspouts: *PVC cement.*

1. Place your barrel near the downspout you selected to plan how to direct the downspout.
2. Disconnect your downspout by sawing the downspout above where the top of the rain barrel will be. Leave room for the elbow to be attached.
3. Attach a downspout elbow to the end of your downspout, directing the rain through the plastic screen vent on top. For an aluminum downspout, secure it to the elbow with screws. For a PVC downspout, secure it to the elbow with PVC cement.
4. Optional: Attach a hose to the spigot, and/or to the overflow hole on the top side of the barrel. Make sure the overflow is directed into your own yard.

Maintain your rain barrel

- Keep your rain barrel spigot closed when you are not using the water. Overflow water will spill from the vent on the top and the hole on the side near the top.
- Regularly check your gutters, downspouts, rain barrel water intake screen, mosquito screen and spigot for leaks, obstructions or debris.
- Keep your rain barrel lid sealed.
- Drain your barrel before temperatures drop below freezing.
- In winter, keep your rain barrel spigot open so water does not accumulate in the barrel and freeze. You can also turn it upside-down or bring it inside to ensure no water accumulates in the barrel.
- Lubricate the metal locking ring with household oil.

Prevent mosquitoes

- Your rain barrel comes with a mosquito-proof screen under the lid. When the mosquito netting is intact, and there are no leaks where mosquitoes can enter the barrel, your rain barrel should be mosquito-free
- Place your barrel so overflow water soaks into the ground instead of pooling on paved surfaces.
 - Keep your rain barrel lid sealed.
 - Keep your barrel free of organic material.
 - During the rainy season, every 3 or 4 days, splash away any water that may collect on the top of the barrel. Mosquitoes need at least 4 days of standing water to develop as larva.
 - If you believe mosquitoes are breeding in your rain barrel, empty your barrel completely, killing all mosquito larvae that may be in your barrel.



Disclaimer

With proper installation, maintenance and use, your rain barrel should function properly. The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago assumes no liability for the installation, maintenance or use of the rain barrel. The District is not responsible for any rain barrel malfunction; property damage or injury associated with a rain barrel malfunction; property damage, or injury associated with a rain barrel, its accessories or contents.

Purchase rain barrels

Dates, times, and locations for pickup at:
www.mwrd.org

For more information, call 312-751-6633.