

# 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 rain water that would otherwise become stormwater runoff or it likely would be diverted to a storm drain. Collected rain water can be used to water lawns and gardens. The City of Cleveland's Division of Water Pollution Control (WPC) cleans and maintains Cleveland's sewer system and encourages the use of rain barrels.

## WHY USE A RAIN BARREL?

- **WATER CONSERVATION:** Approximately 60% of our municipal water supply goes directly to watering our lawns and gardens. By using rain barrels you lessen the amount of water flowing into storm drains, sewer systems and ultimately local waterways. The collected 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 runoff from washing harmful pollutants into our local waterways.
- **NATURAL GARDENING:** Using rainwater on 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 FAQS

- **Will my rain barrel attract mosquitoes? NO!** With a closed-water barrel 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 as much rainwater as you can use.
- **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 through your downspout.
- **Can I put a rain barrel on my house or garage?** We encourage you to check with your local city hall about whether there are any restrictions to cutting your downspout. In the City of Cleveland residents can cut their downspouts to attach a diverter. With a diverter, once the rain barrel fills up, the water goes back into the downspout.



*"When it's clogged and slow, we'll make it flow."*

[www.ClevelandWPC.com](http://www.ClevelandWPC.com)

## 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 those items can be expensive. Barrels can be found at recycling centers or at container retailers. The Cuyahoga Soil & Conservation District, WPC's environmental partner, buys power-washed barrels from Container Compliance on Denison Avenue in Cleveland for \$20.00 each. Container Compliance can be reached at (216) 961-0035.

### Supplies:

- 55 gallon barrel (make sure it is cleaned thoroughly and never contained hazardous chemicals)
- 15/16" drill bit and drill
- 3/4" pipe tap (these are about \$25 and can be found at hardware stores (borrow one from someone instead of buying one, or attend a workshop where they are provided).
- 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 the barrel for the spigot (boiler drain). Drill a second hole near the top of the barrel for the hose barb (keep in mind on which side you want the hole to connect it to the 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. A filled barrel weighs more than 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. Check on the Internet or at your local hardware or home improvement store. The two used by Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District are from [www.gardenwatersaver.com](http://www.gardenwatersaver.com) and [www.gardeners.com](http://www.gardeners.com).

### Maintenance:

In the winter, be sure to empty and store your rain barrel in a basement, garage or shed. 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](http://www.gardeners.com), you will need to get a flexible downspout piece to connect the space on your downspout where the diverter was placed. The flexible piece is inexpensive and can be found at any hardware store. If you use the diverter from [www.gardenwatersaver.com](http://www.gardenwatersaver.com), the diverter can stay on your downspout and be plugged with the plug provided.

Please be sure to check the Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District website for upcoming rain barrel workshops. Go to [www.cuyahogawcd.org](http://www.cuyahogawcd.org), or call at (216) 524-6580.