

# Rain Barrels



## Conserving water through the capture of rain water from a roof

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### **What is a Rain Barrel?**

Rain barrels are containers that are connected to your downspouts to capture runoff from the roof. Rain barrels come in various sizes, ranging from 30 gallons to 100 gallons, and can be made of plastic, wood or metal. You can also use a larger container to capture rainwater, such as a cistern.

### **Rain Barrel Benefits**

By installing a rain barrel or cistern at your home you can:

- Reduce flooding in your yard or basement, by collecting the water and using it for watering plants or slowly releasing it and allowing it to sink into the ground.
- Provide your plants with water they will love. Unlike treated water, which is "softened" with dissolved minerals, rain water is naturally soft. The water stored in your rain barrel is better than municipal water for washing your car and watering indoor or outdoor plants.
- Save money and water! Instead of water from the tap or faucet, you can use the water you've saved to keep your home landscape happy and growing. You'll also reduce your municipal water bill!
- Protect your water supply. Water stored in your rain barrel is water that won't rush off into our streams. Instead, as you use the stored rain water around the home and garden, it will absorb slowly into the ground replenishing groundwater supplies. By decreasing the volume of storm runoff, rain barrels also help moderate stream erosion and the resulting pollution that is impairing most waterways.

### **Where Can I Get a Rain Barrel?**

Call your local garden center to see if they carry them or can order a rain barrel for you. Or, if you are feeling especially creative, you can make your own rain barrel using a large trashcan, agricultural supply container, or other large container and a little ingenuity (call the Butler County Department of Recycling & Waste Management for instructions or more information. Just make sure containers you use are "food-grade" and did not contain poisonous chemicals beforehand.



### **Uses for Collected Water**

- connect to a soaker hose (with the pressure-reducing washer removed)



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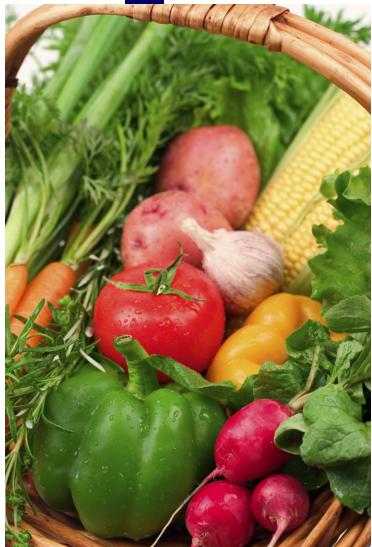
- fill a watering can and hand-water plants or flowerbeds
- keep your compost bin moist
- rinse off gardening tools, wash your car, etc.

### **How Much Rainwater Can I Collect?**

A typical 1/2-inch rainfall will fill a 50- to 55- gallon barrel. Figure about a half gallon of water per square foot of roof area during a 1-inch rainfall. A 2,000-square-foot roof can collect about 1,000 gallons of water (accounting for about 20% loss from evaporation, runoff and splash).

### **What about Filtering?**

Leaf debris, bird droppings and chemicals from roof material won't likely be harmful to decorative plants. Use a window screen or wire mesh to keep out debris and insects and clean the tank periodically to remove any settling.



### ***Is water from a rain barrel safe to use in my vegetable garden?***

There are differing opinions on this subject. Rain barrels that collect water from copper roofs or from roofs where wooden shingles or shakes have been treated with CCA (chromated copper arsenate) to prevent moss or algae growth should not be used on edible plants. If you have treated your roof with chemicals or installed zinc strips to prevent moss or algae growth, you should also not use the water in your rain barrel in your vegetable garden. It is probably best not to use collected water from an asphalt-shingled roof in a vegetable garden due to the chemicals used in the shingle manufacturing process. Other considerations include the potential for air pollution in your area. Water flowing from your roof can contain deposited air pollutants. However, this water may end up in your vegetable garden anyway. No matter what you decide, make sure to wash all your garden produce thoroughly before you eat it!