

# Rain Barrels

## Collecting and Using Rainwater

### What is a rain barrel?

A container used to catch water from a downspout and store it for future use. Rain barrels sit on raised platforms to help boost water pressure when using rainwater for watering. **Rainwater can be used for watering anytime!**

### Why use a rain barrel?

- Save money on monthly water bill.
- Rainwater is naturally “soft” and does not have minerals found in treated water.
- Improve the health of your garden, lawn and trees by watering with rainwater.
- Reduce the amount of runoff flowing into the Cannon River.

### Rain barrel maintenance

#### When using the rain barrel:

- Keep the top of the barrel clear of debris.
- To prevent mosquitos,
  - Keep all joints sealed.
  - Use mosquito proof mesh.

#### During the winter:

- Turn the barrel upside down or store it inside.
- Direct the downspout away from the foundation of the building.

### Restrictions on rain barrel use

Collected rainwater is not recommended for:

- People and pets to drink.
- Use on vegetable and fruit gardens.



Regular garden hose moves water from barrel to garden



Overflow hose directs extra water to lawn

Cement blocks raise rain barrel

# Build Your Own Rain Barrel

Here are instructions to build a low-cost, homemade rain barrel. You can purchase the parts from Menard's, Fleet Farm or any other home improvement or lawn/garden store.

## Parts List (store department)

- 💧 (1) Plastic barrel – a heavy duty trash can with well-fitting lid works well (*garden*)
- 💧 (1) ½" faucet (*plumbing*)
- 💧 (2) ½" plastic washers (*hardware*)
- 💧 (2) ½" conduit locknut (*electrical*)
- 💧 (1) 1 ¼" Overflow hose (*plumbing*)
- 💧 (1) Elbow fitting – ¾" inner diameter 1 ½" male national pipe thread to 1" hose barb fitting (*plumbing*)
- 💧 Silicone – Kitchen/Bath/Plumbing (*paint*)
- 💧 PVC glue (PVC) or liquid nails (*paint*)
- 💧 Window screen (*doors & windows*)

## Tools

- 💧 Utility knife with sharp blade
- 💧 Drill
- 💧 (2) Drill bits – 1 slightly smaller than faucet diameter and 1 slightly smaller than elbow fitting diameter
- 💧 Wrench



Figure 1. Parts and tools necessary to build a homemade rain barrel.



Figure 2. A) A common, heavy-duty garbage can; B) Preparing the lid; C) Preparing the faucet assembly; D) Completed rain barrel.

## Instructions

1. Use a large plastic garbage can or plastic barrel with a well-fitting lid (Fig. 2-A).
2. Cut a hole 12 inches in diameter in the lid using a utility knife with a sharp blade. Turn the lid upside down. Attach a fine screen over the hole in the lid with PVC glue. This will help filter out debris and keep mosquitoes out (Fig. 2-B).
3. Drill a small hole near the base of the barrel (~4 inches from base). Be careful to test the size of the drill bit, so that the faucet will fit through the hole snugly.
4. Thread a locknut then a rubber washer onto the faucet. Insert the faucet into the hole near the base of the barrel. Place the second rubber washer and locknut over the faucet threads from the inside of the barrel. (Fig. 2-C). Apply a bead of silicone inside and outside of the hole to seal, then tighten the assembly.
5. Drill a hole near the top of the barrel where you want the overflow hose to be. Make sure the hole is the same size as the elbow fitting. Insert elbow fitting, seal with a bead of silicone. Attach overflow hose.
6. Position the rain barrel under a downspout from the roof. Elevate the barrel using cinder blocks or other sturdy base. The higher the barrel is off the ground, the more water pressure you will get (Fig. 2-D).



Figure 3. Insert the faucet assembly and wipe off excess silicone from the rubber washer.



Figure 4. An example of what a finished, installed rain barrel looks like.