

What Are Rain Barrels?

Rain barrels collect rainwater that falls on your roof and stores it, so you don't lose it to stormwater runoff. Rather, you can use that clean, soft water with no chlorine, lime or calcium however you want – saving you money in the process.

By catching the water from your roof, a rain barrel reduces the amount of runoff going into the storm drainage system, lessening erosion and decreasing the pollution in our streams and rivers. That's good for everyone.

Did You Know? Over 600 gallons of water will run off a 1,000 sf roof in a 1" rain?

Why Should You Use A Rain Barrel?

A rain barrel can save the average household from paying for about 1,300 gallons of water during the peak summer months, when you need it most. It's a great source for watering your lawn and your flowers.

But that's not the only way to use this free supply of water. You can also:

- Refill your water feature
- Wash your car
- Rinse off your patio
- Keep your gardening tools clean
- Wash your windows

It's easy to save water in your everyday life. Here are a few other suggestions:

- Install a rain garden to harvest water within the landscape. (Learn more about this at OmahaStormwater.org.)
- Install a rain sensor on your irrigation system, so you'll water only when it's necessary.

Enhancements:

Water Level Indicator — With a PVC adapter installed at the base of the barrel, run a piece of clear tubing up and attach at the top of the barrel. Place a piece of tape over the end and poke a hole in the tape. The level in the clear pipe will show the level inside the barrel.

Expanding Capacity — Attach the overflow pipe to an adjacent barrel to expand your total capacity. Continue this process to your desired capacity, making sure there is a diverter or overflow into the landscape after the last barrel.

Different Containers — Rain barrels can be constructed using a variety of storage containers as long as they are clean. Use the same instructions described here for creating your rain barrel.



The City of Omaha Stormwater Program is a comprehensive program comprised of various elements and activities designed to reduce stormwater pollution and eliminate prohibited non-stormwater discharges.



Environmental Quality Control
402-444-3908
OmahaStormwater.org
OmahaPlants.org

This is a message from the City of Omaha Environmental Quality Control Division. Funded By Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality

Building A Rain Barrel

Step-By-Step Instructions
To Building And Installing
Your Own Rain Barrel



Building And Installing An Inexpensive Rain Barrel

Getting Started:

Before you start, determine where your rain barrel will sit and where you want the overflow water to run. Make sure your overflow area is stabilized to prevent erosion.

1. Gather Materials

What You Will Need:

- 1 One 55 Gallon Barrel
(Removable Lid Is Preferred)
- 2 Tube of Water Tight Sealant
- 3 Two Rubber Washers
- 4 Two Metal Washers
- 5 One Hose Clamp
- 6 One Spigot with Nut
- 7 Filter mesh i.e. Pond Plant Bag

- 8 Inlet Filter
i.e. Filter Basket or Atrium Grate
- 9 Drill and Drill Bits
- 10 Hand Saw, Jig Saw, or Sharp Utility Knife
- 11 Scissors
- 12 Overflow Materials
- 13 Adapter to Connect to Downspout
- 14 A Stable Base



Assembling Parts:

2. Create Water Entry

If there's not already an inlet hole, you can use a hand saw, jig saw, or utility knife to create the opening in the lid of the barrel where water will be entering the barrel from your home's downspout. Cut the hole large enough to accommodate water flow from downspout.



Using a filter basket, commonly found in pond supply sections of stores, is an easy filter to use for a rain barrel. Cut the opening so that the lip of the basket rests on top of the barrel, preventing it from falling in. Use a pond plant bag with the basket to help filter smaller debris from entering the rain barrel.



3. Cut the Lower Drain Hole

Mark spot near the bottom of the rain barrel where the sidewall is flat. Drill a hole using a bit the same size or slightly smaller than the spigot.

4. Insert the Spigot

Slowly screw the threaded spigot into the hole. With most hard plastic barrels, this will "thread" the spigot into the barrel, making a tight connection. If the spigot is loose, use a snugly fitting rubber washer, metal washer and silicone to make a water-tight connection.



5. Seal It Up

If needed to secure the spigot, add a metal washer inside the barrel and securing the spigot in place using a nut. Allow sealant to dry.



6. Create Water Overflow Exit

Drill one or two holes near the very top of the barrel to allow for overflow. Use adapters and pipe of the same size to route the water where you want it to go on your property and away from your foundation.



In order for water not to back up into the downspout, the overflow for the rain barrel at a minimum must be the same size of the downspout going into the barrel. This can be achieved in a variety of ways, including: one large hole or multiple, smaller holes connected together.

Another overflow option is to install a diverter in line with your downspout. This will stop water from flowing into the rain barrel once it is full. There are different variations of diverters available, be sure to select one suitable for your home.

Installation:

7. Position Your Rain Barrel

Position the rain barrel on an elevated platform to help increase water pressure and give easier access to the spigot. A full 55 gallon barrel can weigh 450 pounds so make sure the rain barrel is properly secured and supported when placed on an elevated platform.



WINTER STORAGE:

During the winter months, the barrel must be drained and the downspout redirected from flowing into the barrel. If water is left in the barrel, it will freeze and the barrel will expand and possibly rupture.