

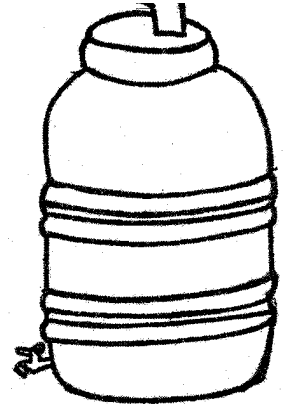


Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Monroe County Extension Service
Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Program
1100 Simonton Street, Suite 2-260
Key West, FL 33040
305-292-4501
Monroe@ifas.ufl.edu



How to Make a Rain Barrel



Tools: Electric or Hand Drill
15/16-inch Drill Bit

Supplies: Sabre or Hand Saw
Plastic Drum (Look under "Barrels & Drums" in the Yellow Pages)
3/4-inch male-thread spigot (with slant head)
PVC Cement

Directions: Be sure to only use barrels that have carried food products!

1. Drill 15/16-inch hole at the first even part of the barrel-about 6 to 8 inches from the barrel bottom.
2. Screw 3/4-inch spigot about half-way into the hole-it will be a very snug fit.
3. Apply the PVC cement to the exposed threads and finish screwing spigot into the drum.
4. If using a downspout, use a sabre saw to cut a hole in the lid so that downspout fits snugly. Caulking can be applied where the downspout meets the barrel top.
5. Other options: If your house does not have downspouts, use an open lid barrel. Drill large screws or bolt into the drum, below the threads. Place a small-mesh screen over the top, with screen edges overlapping the screws. Place a bungee cord around the barrel, below the screws, to hold the screen in place.
6. Elevate barrel on two to three sets of concrete block laying on their sides. This will allow easy access to the spigot and provide more water pressure.
7. You may want to add an overflow downspout at the top of the barrel-or a second spigot-so that you can direct the overflow into a specific part of your yard.

NOTE: Barrels come in many sizes, shapes and colors

- A 55-gallon barrel can fill up with a 1/2-inch rainfall, depending on the size of your roof.
- White drums seem to disintegrate more quickly in the sun.
- Barrels either have removable lids or are "sealed," with two small openings. It is easier to clean out debris with removable lid barrels. The "sealed" barrels have a flat bottom and may be more stable.

WHY A RAIN BARREL?

Why not? Since creation man has been saving water for his needs when rainfall ran short. As water becomes more scarce in the South Florida area, it would be wise to reexamine the methods our forefathers used to conserve water. They used innovative ways for water collection and reuse techniques. We will look at some ideas and facts that other people are using around the country.

Have you ever wondered how much water runs off your roof? During a typical rain storm producing 1" of rain in a 24-hour period, over 700 gallons of water will run off the average roof, an impervious area of 1200 square feet. Consider the cumulative impacts of stormwater runoff in our nearshore areas. The rain barrel system costs less than \$30 to install and will pay for itself in water savings in a short time. This cost includes the barrel, spigot, glue and the fittings to connect it to a downspout. For a little more you can add more rain barrels.

One downspout on a roof collects about 50% of the runoff. The volume of water depends on how much it rains and the roof size. This rain barrel replenishes its water supply every time it rains. You'll capture the fresh water otherwise lost to runoff. Remember that recycled barrels need to be washed out before first use.

There are no health department regulations for rain barrels, and they are perfectly legal. They need to be covered with screen mesh or a tight fitting lid to thwart mosquitoes and other insects from breeding. Be sure that the rain barrel doesn't become a hazard to small children and animals. Secure barrels properly, and keep away from stairs where young children may climb up and fall in. Elevate your rain barrel slightly to make it easier to attach a hose or place a sprinkling can under the spigot.

ADVANTAGES OF A RAIN BARREL

Lawn and garden irrigation makeup nearly 40% of total household water use in the summer. A rain barrel collects water and stores it for when you need it most - during periods of drought - to water plants, wash your car, etc. It provides an ample supply of free "soft water" that contains no chlorine, lime or calcium.

A rain barrel will save most homeowners about 1300 gallons of water during the peak summer months. Saving water not only helps the environment, but also money and energy. Diverting water from storm drains also decreases the impact of runoff to Gulf side waters and Oceanside reef tracts of the Florida Keys.

Use your rain barrel in areas where you may not have access to a spigot. Keep your compost pile moist to promote the decomposition process throughout the year. Make a "compost tea" by putting some compost in an old pillowcase or pantyhose and put in the barrel. Add a bag of water-soluble fertilizer in the barrel and you have 50 gallons of fertilizer at a time rather than mixing a gallon at a time..

Connecting a soaker hose to your barrel is a great way to water shallow-rooted plants. It takes about 8 to 10 hours to empty a barrel this way.

Watering plants with warm water in a barrel reduces shock and damping off of transplants.

Collecting rainwater in a barrel directs moisture away from building foundations.

A full barrel will provide water to 240 square feet of garden space - the equivalent of a 1 cm rain shower.