

Rain Barrels

A low-tech way to conserve water and save money



What are rain barrels?

Rain barrels are used to collect and store rainwater runoff, typically from your rooftop. Instead of running down driveways and sidewalks to sewers, rainwater is collected into a rain barrel where it can be stored for later use. Rain barrels are a simple, efficient, low-cost method for you to conserve water.

How can I use the rainwater I've collected?

- Attach regular or soaker hoses to the bottom spigot and direct to landscaped areas nearby.
- Fill a bucket or watering can to hand-water plants in your garden.
- Water your house plants.
- Give your pet a bath.
- Wash cars and bicycles.
- Use for general cleaning around the house and garden.



Why should I use a rain barrel?

- It is estimated that during the hot summer months, the average homeowner uses 40 percent of household water in their yard. The rain that falls on your roofs can be used to offset household water usage and reduce your water bills.
- A quarter-inch of rain falling on your roof can yield more than 200 gallons of water. In the Midland area, the average annual rainfall is more than 31 inches. That means you could collect 24,000 gallons of water a year in rain barrels!
- Collecting rainwater where it falls reduces the negative impacts of having it run down your driveway and lawn, where it picks up pesticides and pollutants like motor oil, carrying them into our rivers and streams.

Features of a rain barrel

- The 55-gallon containers stand about 48 inches high.
- When full of water, they can weigh 400 pounds!
- Made of food-grade recycled plastic containers which can be painted.
- They are sealed to keep them safe around children and animals.
- The screw-off lid is equipped with a screen to keep debris and insects from the water.
- A valve on the bottom of the barrels to which a hose is attached makes the captured rainwater available through a simple gravity system.
- An overflow connector at the top of the barrels allows for a hose to be attached and directed to other landscaped areas.



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Midland, MI 48640
989.835.4886
littleforks.org

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How are rain barrels installed and used?

- Rain barrels work best when placed on a stand or concrete blocks under a downspout. The added height increases water pressure and provides space for a bucket or watering can to be placed under the valve.
- Once the barrel is positioned on the platform, measure and cut the downspout to a length just above the top of the barrel. Downspouts can be cut with a hacksaw. Save the cut-off for reattachment in the winter.
- Attach two elbows or a 2" by 3" flex-elbow connector (available at most hardware stores and home centers) to the downspout to direct water to the top of the barrel.
- To use, attach a hose (a soaker hose is great) to the bottom valve and direct to landscaping, or simply fill buckets or watering cans to wash vehicles or water plants.

- The ideal time to install rain barrels is when the rainy season begins in the spring. In the fall, empty the barrel and store it upside-down. Then replace the downspout.



Where can I buy a rain barrel?

There are many resources online and in home and garden stores.

Bangor Township sells recycled barrels locally for the low price of \$35.00 apiece. The overflow valve and the top both have netting to prevent insect activity. They are approved for use by Mosquito Control. To purchase, call Terry Watson at 989.684.8931.

Please see our website for additional rain barrel sources and upcoming events.

How to decorate your rain barrel!

Make decorating your rain barrel a family or group project. It's fun and easy!

Painting your rain barrel:

- You may use any spray paint as a base that will work on plastic. Be sure to follow the directions on the can.
- If you do not want to paint your entire barrel, you can always just use acrylic paints directly on the surface. You can also use acrylic paints on top of your base coat.
- You should always follow up the finished paint design with a coat of finish that is designed for use on plastics.

If you have any questions, please contact us for tips and helpful hints!



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