

Rain Barrel Facts

Stormwater and Water Conservation Benefits

- 💧 Your rain barrel will help conserve water supply resources.
- 💧 Rooftops, roads, parking lots, driveways, and even compacted soils are impervious surfaces. Infiltration, allowing the water to soak into nearby soils, will recharge groundwater supplies by using a more natural water cycle path.
- 💧 By reducing your demand from established water supplies during the dry summer months, you are helping the environment.
- 💧 Your rain barrel will help slow runoff and encourage infiltration.

Interesting Facts about Rainwater

- 💧 1 inch of rain produces 27,152 gallons of rainwater over one acre of land.
- 💧 Iowa rainfall averages 32 inches per year or 868,864 gallons per acre per year.
- 💧 Typically, rainwater runoff is collected in storm sewer systems and released directly into streams. This direct runoff can contribute pollutant loads and cause flooding in developed areas with a lot of impervious surface (like roofs, sidewalks, parking lots, and other impervious surfaces that don't allow rain water to infiltrate).
- 💧 Rain water runoff carries with it pollutants that contribute to poor water quality that can affect the health of local waterways. The heaviest pollutant loads come in the first few inches of runoff from a storm event.
- 💧 1-inch of rain on a 1,000 square foot roof yields 623 gallons of water.

Managing Your Rain Barrel During the Growing Season and Winter

- 💧 **Water wise gardening with the rain barrel:**
Rain patterns show regular rainfall events occur during April, May and June, just when vegetable gardens and perennial beds are being established. A water wise approach is to water annuals and perennials with rain barrel water and mulch heavily to retain moisture during the dryer months of July and August. However, don't despair, rain showers can occur in July and August to refill the barrel.
- 💧 **Increase the capacity of rainwater storage:**
You can connect more than one rain barrel together at each downspout. Raising the barrels off the ground by placing them on cement or wooden blocks will ease access to the faucet.
- 💧 **Managing heavy rains:**
It is essential to consider the impact of heavy winter rains on your drainage system. An overfull barrel has the potential to cause erosion around your home. Your rain barrel should always have an overflow spigot on the side, near the top.
- 💧 It is best to have your overflow hose run onto a vegetated area allowing the run off to infiltrate back into the groundwater.

Rain Barrel Maintenance:

- Most problems with rain barrels can be easily avoided if water is not allowed to stand in the barrel for more than five to seven days.
- In cold weather, take your rain barrel out of operation. When water freezes, it expands, possibly cracking your barrel or hose. Disconnect your rain barrel for the winter months. Store upside down so it will fully drain and remain relatively clean.
- Mosquitoes are a frequent concern with rain barrels as these insects breed in stagnant water. A fine mesh screen or filter fitted to the top of your rain barrel will prevent adult mosquitoes from gaining access to the barrel and laying eggs. If you opt not to use a screen or filter, you will need to completely empty your barrel every week so that mosquito eggs laid in the water do not have time to hatch. Another alternative is to add one tablespoon of olive oil to your water, this will keep mosquitoes from breeding in the barrel. Mosquito dunks can also be placed in your rain barrel to kill the eggs and larvae on the water surface.

Using your collected rain water:

- The most common use of harvested rainwater is for watering lawns, gardens and houseplants. It is naturally oxygenated and has not had chlorine or fluoride added to it.
- One way to recycle rainwater is for washing your car. In fact, recycled rainwater is perfect for cleaning not just your car but the exterior of your house, outdoor furniture and toys as well as driveways and walkways.
- Rainwater is ideal for washing your dog.
- Rainwater can also be used to rinse mud off your hands, boots, and muddy garden tools before entering the house.
- The natural softness of rainwater can make these cleaning tasks easier; a little bit of suds in a bucket will go a long way with soft rain water.



WARNING:

Do not use rain barrel water for drinking, cooking or bathing.

Web Sites:

<http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/pworks/watrshed/educate/barrel/index.htm>

<http://www.hgtv.com/landscaping/rain-barrels/index.html>

http://www.stormwatercenter.net/Pollution_Prevention_Factsheets/rain_barrels.htm

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Pottswcd.org