

Rain Barrel Handbook



2715 Reading Road
Cincinnati, Ohio 45206

Overview

Locating Your Rain Barrel

Two considerations in selecting a site for your rain barrel:

- Location of your downspout
- Proximity of the area you want to water

Other considerations:

Gravity

When using a rain barrel to water gravity is your best friend.

- If your yard has a downward grade from your downspout towards the area you intend to water, a hose can be used to water bushes and trees or to ditch irrigate a vegetable garden.
- If your yard is level you can elevate your rain barrel, and to some degree, be able to irrigate using a hose.
- Elevating your rain barrel will also allow you to fill watering cans and buckets.

Water Pressure

There is very little... For every 12 inches of water in your barrel you will have 2 pounds of water pressure. For example, most homes have between 50 to 60 pounds of water pressure. Without the assistance of a pump you can not use sprinklers or hose nozzles.

Managing Overflow

In most municipalities (including Cincinnati) you are required to direct rain water from your roof into the storm water system. Please keep in mind that a volume of approximately 500 gallons of water is generated for every inch of rain on a 1,000 square foot roof (an area 20 x 50 feet). An average rain barrel holds between 40 – 50 gallons of water. The good news is that your rain barrel will fill up very quickly - the down side is that you need to have a way to manage the overflow.

Some options for managing overflow are:

- Return to storm water system via a direct line from your rain barrel
- Use of a diverter installed on your downspout above your rain barrel
- Direct overflow into an adjacent municipal storm drain (most likely not allowed by building code)
- Direct overflow to a Rain Garden or Swale (Needs to be approved by your municipal storm water management department)

Why is it important to manage the overflow from your rain barrel:

- To prevent erosion damage to your and/or your neighbor's yard
- To prevent flooding your and/or your neighbor's basement
- To conform to your municipal building codes

Care and Maintenance

Empty and rinse out your rain barrel at least once a year.

Mosquito Control:

- Screen
If your barrel is open at the top
- Vegetable Oil Treatment
If you do notice Mosquito hatchlings in your barrel, simply add a tablespoon of vegetable oil to the water's surface.
- Drain and Clean
At the sign of Mosquito hatchlings drain and rinse out the barrel.
- Mosquito Dunks
Another option is to use "Mosquito Dunks" manufactured by Summit, 235 South Kresson St., Baltimore, MD 21224. Mosquito Dunks active ingredient is *Bacillus thuringiensis* subspecies *israelensis* called BTI that kills mosquito and black fly larvae for 30 days or more. They are sold in packages of 6, and one quarter dunk will treat one barrel. These are available at local nurseries or on the internet. Price range is \$9 – 13.

Uses for rain barrel water:

- Watering flowers, trees, shrubs, and garden
- Watering your lawn
- Watering indoor plants
- Watering seedlings in a seed starter tray or green house
- Cooling compost and rinsing out your compost bucket
- Bird bath

Do not use rain barrel water to:

- Drink (human and house pet consumption)
- Wash hands and face
- Wash dishes
- Wash clothes

Please note: Rain barrel water is not of sufficient quality to be used as "potable" water. This includes its use for drinking and bathing as well as household cleaning. Although there are many ways humans can use collected rain water, it is none-the-less important to keep in mind that it may contain disease vectors or pathogens and may cause long-term health problems if it does not meet certain water quality standards.

Installing your Rain Barrel

- Place your stand and barrel near the chosen downspout.
In most situations the rain barrel will need to be raised in order to fill pails and watering can, as well as to allow for a gravity flow using a hose. To raise your rain barrel an easy and inexpensive way is to use four 8x8x16 inch concrete building blocks. Be sure your stand is well balanced; a full barrel weighs approximately 400 pounds.
- Where you cut into the drain pipe will be determined by the type of elbow and/or diverter you will be using. Refer to the rain barrel or diverter manufacturer's

- instructions. If you are building a rain barrel with your own improvised design and parts, then “Necessity is the Mother of Invention.”
- Please note: Determine the location of the cut on the downspout with the rain barrel standing on its raised stand before you cut the downspout.
 - Cutting the downspout can be a bit of a struggle. If you have a chop saw with a metal blade you can take down your downspout, cut it at the desired place, and then reinstall it. However in most situations people cut a metal downspout with a hacksaw and tin snips. If your downspout is vinyl then it can be cut with a saw or cut with a utility knife and sheers.

Rain Barrel Sources

Leland Reilich – Based in Cincinnati
Sells rain barrels made from 50 gallon recycled containers
919- 270-4903

Natural Rain Water
Source for rain barrels, kits and supplies
<http://www.naturalrainwater.com/index.html>

Clean Air Living
Source for rain barrels, diverters, eco-friendly tools and gardening supplies
<http://www.cleanairgardening.com/>

The Rain Well
Source for plastic barrels, rain barrels and cistern systems
<http://www.therainwell.com/>

Rain Barrel Guide
A good reference site for information on water harvesting and rain barrels
<http://www.rainbarrelguide.com/>

Center for Watershed Protection
Information on Rain Barrels and Rain Gardens
http://www.cwp.org/Community_Watersheds/brochure.pdf

Hart Industries
3637 Spring Grove Ave.
Cincinnati, OH 45223
800-541-4238
Bulkhead Fitting:
Banjo TF 075 - 3/4”

Neighborhood Gardens Program
Civic Garden Center
2715 Reading Rd.
Cincinnati, OH 45206
513-221-0981
www.civicgardencenter.org