

## What to Buy MAKING YOUR OWN

### Type of Barrel

Almost any container, including garbage cans, can be made into a rain barrel. However, if the barrel is not designed to continually hold the weight it will quickly warp. The best barrels for making your own water catchment system are plastic food grade barrels or large wooden barrels.

### Colours of Food-Grade Barrels

Plastic food-grade barrels are coloured depending on what they used to contain. The most common home-made barrel colour is blue, because it used to hold non-toxics such as soap. White barrels (previously holding food) can also be used but will start to grow algae in direct sunlight. Whatever barrel you use, remember to clean it thoroughly.

## Additional Barrels CONNECTING MORE THAN ONE

Water likes to be as low as possible. You can connect barrels via a hose at each faucet. The water will travel between the two barrels, remaining at equal levels. This is true no matter how many barrels you choose to connect. Hose adapters are available at many local hardware stores selling rain barrels.

## remember to be safe

Water is heavy. Make sure that your **rain barrel is strong enough** and that it is securely supported.

Make sure **it has a secure lid** to prevent children and animals from getting inside.

Make sure all openings are **covered with screens or netting** to stop mosquitoes from breeding and debris from clogging up your barrel or tap.

**Don't drink the barrel water**, it could contain harmful bacteria. Be careful when making alterations to existing gutters and downspouts to avoid causing gutter backups and damage to your home.

Why not share  
these friendly tips with  
your neighbour?

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## UTILIZING RAIN BARRELS



Rain water is great for your garden and **REDUCES DEMAND** on your community water system or well. Use a rain barrel to save some for a sunny day!

## why rain barrels?

The average house roof can collect 272 litres (60 gallons) of rain for each 9 square metres (100 square feet) of roof, for every 25 mm (1

inch) of rain. That is hundreds of litres of water you can use in your garden every year.

Rain barrels generally have the capacity to store about 200 litres (50 gallons) of water. Rain water cisterns have the capacity to store thousands of litres of water and are the most effective means of using harvested water for irrigation all summer long. Rain barrels however are a practical option when space and funds are limited. Start with barrels to see how simple and beneficial it is to collect rain water. After all, it falls free from the sky!

Rain water is better for your plants than tap water. It does not contain any chlorine and its warmer temperature will not shock the plants.



For more information on rain water cisterns, see the *RDN Rain Water Harvesting Best Practices Guidebook*.



## Installation

### make a base

**Water is heavy.** 1 cubic meter weighs 1000 kg at room temperature. You must build a firm, level base to **support the weight and prevent accidental tipping**. As well, you will want to raise the barrel high enough to fit a watering can under the faucet. The higher you place your barrel, the **better the water pressure and flow**. Cinder blocks or bricks on a gravel base is easy and safe.

### retrofit your downspout

**If you choose to cut your downspout,** measure the height of the barrel first, including the base and add 1 inch. Once you have fit your barrel underneath, remember to keep the cut off downspout to reconnect to the house drainage in winter.

Alternatively, you can install a downspout diverter. A diverter allows you to redirect flow between the rain barrel and the downspout drain simply by turning a valve.

### overflow

During heavy rainstorms, **your barrel can easily fill and overflow**. The overflow device, located near the top of the barrel, should be used to redirect excess **rainwater away from your house** to ensure groundwater recharge. Fast moving water can cause erosion, so be sure to avoid areas with steep slopes or bare soil. Rain barrels should be disconnected from the downspout in winter to avoid overflow events and freezing.

## downspouts

Most homes have more than one downspout.

**To collect more water either add barrels to each spout** or connect two or more barrels together in a chain by having one overflow into the next.

## What to Buy

### Commercial Barrels

The difference between most commercially available rain barrels is mainly aesthetic. However, always remember to look for:

### Metal faucets

Whatever type of rain barrel you buy, wood or plastic, you will want to make sure that the **faucet is made of metal**. Plastic faucets can easily break off.

### Screening over holes

All openings on your barrel must be covered with thick screening. **Standing water is a breeding ground for mosquitoes**. As well, a screen will trap small objects such as pine needles that can easily clog the faucet.



### Secure lid

If you can open the top of your barrel, make sure that it **has a locking lid** to prevent children or wildlife from gaining access. This will prevent contamination and accidental drowning.

