

Stormwater Management: Homeowner's Guide to Rain Barrels

What is it?

Rain barrels are a way to disconnect your downspout and save the stormwater for other uses. Rain barrels are typically connected to gutter downspouts and collect the runoff from roofs.

How does it work?

Rain barrels capture runoff, hold it for a period of time, and allow the water to be used for different purposes. The rain barrel will likely have an overflow for when the barrel fills up during heavy rainfall. There is typically a screen on the top of the barrel where the water enters the barrel to keep out leaves and other debris. The screen also limits mosquito activity in the rain barrel if it is not drained in three (3) days.

How do you maintain it?

After Rain Events: Clean the screen by removing any leaves that could block the flow of water into the barrel. Use the water in the barrel so that it's empty and ready to collect runoff from the next rain.

Annually: Clean gutters to remove leaf debris that could clog the barrel.

Special Winter Needs: In the fall, empty the rain barrel/cistern before the water can freeze. Rinse out the barrel to remove any accumulated sediment. Do not reconnect the barrel until spring. During the winter months, connect a piece of flexible gutter to the end of the downspout and direct the outlet to a grassy area of the yard.