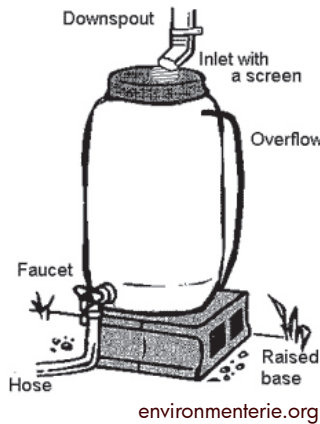


# A GUIDE TO RAIN BARRELS



## What is a Rain Barrel?

Rain barrels are 50 gallon food grade containers that can be used to collect water from rooftops via the gutter and downspout. The water collected in a rain barrel can be used for watering lawns and gardens, washing cars, or for the other multitude of needs for water outside the home. As an added benefit, these barrels help prevent basement flooding, lower water bill costs, and prevent pollutants from entering lakes and streams. Rain barrels can be purchased at stores or can be made at home from clean, recycled food-grade barrels.



## Why Are Rain Barrels Important?

The use of a rain barrel reduces the amount of rain water from roofs that runs off of lawns and into sewer systems. Because combined sewers in Syracuse can overflow during wet weather, the use of rain barrels can help reduce the amount of pollutants going into Onondaga Creek and other local waterways.

Rain barrels help to conserve water which save money and natural resources.

No roof is too small!  
An 800 sq. ft. roof can yield 500 gallons of water in a one inch rain storm. Imagine the amount of water that could be conserved if every house in Syracuse had a rain barrel!

## A Low Maintenance Way to Catch the Rain: Tips & Tricks

**Check the Screen:** Make sure the screen is always tightly secured so no mosquitoes, rodents or debris get inside, and patch any holes in the mesh screen.

**Cleaning:** Unless a lot of debris is collecting inside your rain barrel or there is bothersome algae growth, a rain barrel really only needs to be cleaned when it is brought inside for the winter or before it is reinstalled in the spring. To clean your rain barrel, use vinegar or soap and water and spray it out with your hose.

**Overflow:** If you are home during a storm, go outside to check that water is being diverted away from the house and that the barrel is not overflowing. If you notice your rain barrel is always overflowing it may be a sign that the rooftop being drained from the down-spout is yielding too much water for the barrel to handle, or, perhaps that the rain barrel diverter has been installed too high. If the overflowing barrel becomes a problem, reinstall the barrel onto a smaller section of rooftop or add a second or third rain barrel.

**Leaks:** Check all hose and spigot connections for leaks. Use plumbing Goop to seal any leaks from hardware on the barrel.

**Winter Storage:** The barrel must be disconnected over the wintertime so that ice doesn't form inside where it could expand and crack the barrel. This should be done in October. If possible, store the barrel indoors. If you must leave the barrel outside, remove the hoses, open the spigots and turn it upside down to allow any water to drain out. Leave the hose connected to the rain barrel diverter, but point it upwards and attach it to the downspout with zip ties. Water should not come out of the hose from the diverter if it is secured upright.



# How-To Guide

## Materials

Rain Barrel Kit (Rain barrel, spigot, and screen), Diverter Kit, Pencil, Screwdriver, Hack saw, Ruler, Drill with 1" diameter bit, Level, Gloves, Safety glasses, Concrete block for rain barrel to sit on, Standard or soaker hose, Rain gutter splash block for overflow.

## Tips for Success

### Roll Out the Rain Barrel in the Spring

Wait until the last frost (usually in Mid-May for Central NY) to install your rain barrel.

### Find the Right Rooftop and Downspout

Choose a downspout that is close to the area where you want to use the water.

### Remember Gravity

Your rain barrel will work best if it is slightly uphill of the area where you want to use the water. It is recommended that your barrel be elevated off the ground with cinder blocks to ensure good water pressure from the barrel.

### Know your Ground

Make sure the ground beneath the selected downspout is solid and level. When filled, the rain barrel will weigh about 400 pounds and you don't want it to tip over! Gravel, wooden boards, or concrete slabs can be used to create a firm base beneath the rain barrel.

## Installing Your Rain Barrel

Unwrap the packaging and remove the screen and spigot from inside the rain barrel.

Wrap the threads of the spigot with the supplied Teflon tape, then screw the spigot onto the barrel until the hex-shaped face touches the barrel. Adjust the spigot to a useful position. If using the rain barrel diverter (recommended if you have rain gutters):

- Use a hack saw to cut one of the nubs off the side of the rain barrel.
- Enlarge the opening with a one inch drill bit or a round file.
- Place a grommet from the diverter kit into the enlarged opening.
- Remove any bits of plastic that may have fallen into the rain barrel
- The screen for the top of the rain barrel fits rather loosely. It is recommended that you secure it with screws or another suitable method.

Raise the rain barrel by placing it on concrete blocks. This will allow the water to drain better and also raise the barrel up so that a watering can may be placed under the spigot.

Install the diverter according to the instructions included in the box. **IMPORTANT:** The outlet of the diverter should be at the same height as the inlet of the rain barrel to ensure that the rain barrel does not overflow. The included diverter kit fits either 2"x 3" or 3"x 4" downspouts.

Connect the included hose from the diverter to the rain barrel. Trim the hose length if needed. When re-installing the rain barrel in the spring, be sure the rain barrel and hoses are clean and do not leak.

## Using Your Rain Barrel

After it rains, let it drain! Having an empty rain barrel will allow you to catch even more rain in the next rainstorm. If your rain barrel is already filled to capacity when it rains, all of the new rain will overflow out of the barrel. Although having a full rain barrel at the start of a new rain storm is not a problem, you'll be able to capture a greater proportion of the rainwater that falls on the rooftop and make good use of it around your lawn and garden if you have emptied your barrel ahead of time. Only keep your rain barrel filled when a period of dry weather is expected.

## Let the Water Soak In

A great way to use the water in your rain barrel is to attach a soaker hose to the outlet spigot at the bottom of your barrel. Soaker hoses have tiny holes that slowly release water. This is a great way to gradually empty your rain barrel and water your garden when you know you will be away from home for a few days. Soaker hoses can be purchased at local hardware or garden supply stores.

## Precautions

The water you catch in your rain barrel should not be consumed by humans or pets and should only be used to water lawns and gardens. Although your rain barrel is made of plastic, bacteria and other chemicals may still enter from the rooftop into the water. Rain barrels must be equipped with filtration devices to make the water safe for human consumption. Also, rain barrel water should not be used to water vegetable gardens, as some harmful chemicals may leach from rooftop materials.