

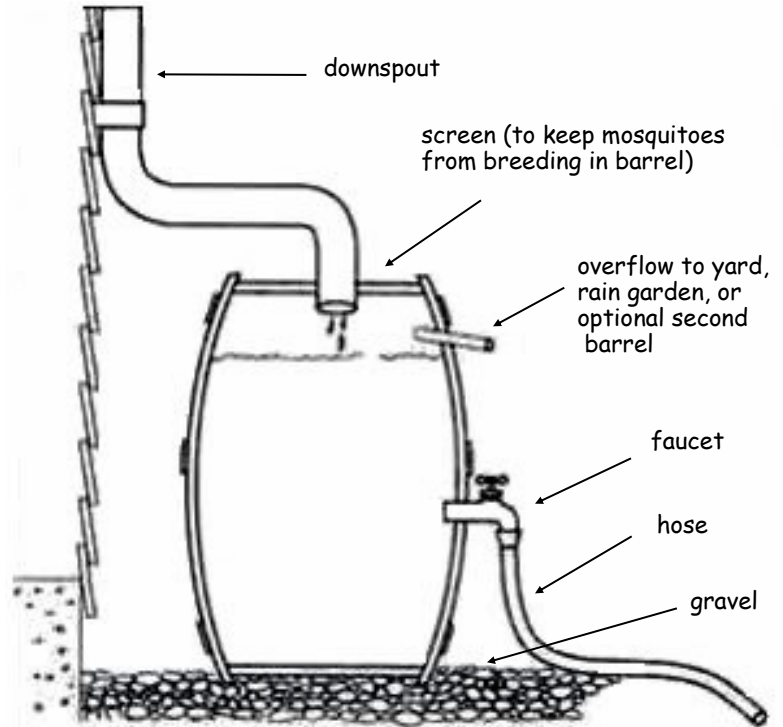
Rain Barrels

Conserve Water, Money, and the Environment with Rain Barrels!

A rain barrel is a container that acts as a reservoir, collecting rain water runoff from the gutters of outdoor structures such as a your house or shed. This water can be used to water your garden and provides a number of environmental and financial benefits.

Benefits of Rain Barrels

Rain barrels act as an alternative to using municipal water or well water for irrigation. This conserves the municipal water supply and utilizes rain water that would otherwise be underutilized. Additionally, using rain water can lower your long term water cost and some cities even offer financial incentives when using rainwater for irrigation. A rain barrel's most important benefit lies in its ability to direct overflow to an area where rain can infiltrate the pervious ground such as a lawn or garden. This helps replenish underground water aquifers as well as reduce flooding and pollution of local water bodies.



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Important Considerations

It is important to place your rain barrel next to a drainage gutter as this is their water source. Rain barrels use gravity as the main force to transport water. Elevating your rain barrel will improve its flow rate necessary for drip irrigation through the use of a garden hose, soaker hose, or watering can. Plan on how much rainwater you want to capture. You can maximize the amount of water collected by connecting multiple rain barrels together. This will transfer water from the full barrels to empty ones. However, you must also plan for the filling and overflow of your barrels. Attaching a hose toward the top of your rain barrel can direct overflow away from the foundation of your home.

Type of Rain Barrels

There are a variety of different types of rain barrels that differ in size, color, shape, and features. Select a size and capacity that is based on where you plan to place them and how much water you expect to collect. Pick a color and design that will fit your home/landscape's design and color. Features such as debris screens, flat backs, opening lid, water outlets, and collapsible designs can add convenience to your rain barrel experience. Rain barrels can be purchased from your local garden and home stores as well as the internet. All other materials can be found in your local hardware store. If you decide to utilize a used barrel, make sure to clean it thoroughly and that it wasn't used to hold toxic chemicals.



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Building your Rain Barrel

1. Plan out which gutter downspout you will be using as the water source.
2. Prepare this area. Placing your barrel on a concrete pad or patio will be the most convenient option. If you're placing it on the ground, prepare the area by digging out a depth of one or two inches and use gravel, sand, or pavers to stabilize and level the surface. If you plan to elevate your barrel, place a sturdy platform on this surface.
3. Begin assembling your rain barrel (s). Your assembly may include installing hose connectors (s) or a spigot and connecting an overflow hose. Installation of special features or barrels will require more assembly steps.
4. Place your assembled barrel right below the gutter downspout at its final installed height.
5. Make sure there are no heating or electrical cables running through your downspout. Cut or bore into your downspout to direct water into the rain barrel.
6. Position and level the barrel as needed.
7. Make sure your barrel's overflow flows away from your home's foundation.

Using your Rain Barrel

The water inside your rain barrel is untreated. This is good for plants but not for human or pet consumption. Only use the water to irrigate your plants, letting any overflow drain to a yard area. Wash the vegetables or fruit with tap water before eating or cooking with them.

Install a debris screen and caulk any gaps to prevent mosquitoes from laying eggs in the standing water. Try to use the collected rainwater within a week or two of collection to prevent any odors or algae growth. When not collecting rainwater, leave the spigot open to drain the water from the barrel. Place a splash block below the spigot to prevent erosion and make sure it is not entering your home's foundation.

Secure the barrel from tipping over and regularly check for damage or leaks. Make sure to drain and disconnect the barrel from the downspout before freezing weather arrives. Re-configure your downspout to handle runoff and rinse your rain barrels prior to storage.



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CAPE ATLANTIC
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

6260 Old Harding Highway
Mays Landing, New Jersey 08330
Phone (609) 625-3144 Fax (609) 625-7360
www.capeatlantic.org

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