

# REDUCE YOUR “RAINWATER FOOTPRINT” WITH A HOME RAIN BARREL



Distributed by:  
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*The Detroit area receives about 30 inches of rain each year. Many homes will “discharge” over 50,000 gallons via paved surfaces and sloped areas each year. Rainwater runoff flows into storm sewers and storm drains which connect via pipes to lakes and rivers. The rush of the stormwater dislodges aquatic life and intensifies flooding.*

*Rain barrels are useful to gardeners...can reduce hazards due to ice on paved surfaces....and benefit water quality.*

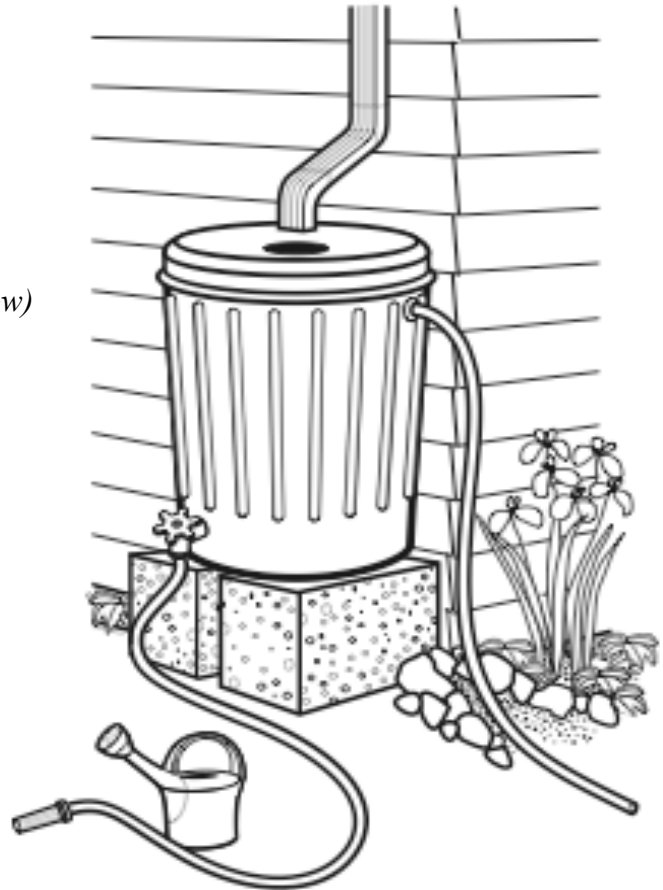
*Rain barrel installation and use needs advance planning. These tips from SOCWA Master Composters will help your rain barrel investment work for you!*

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## **RAIN BARREL FEATURES TO CONSIDER:**

- *Removable top – useful for dipping water out with a watering can.*
- *Overflow portal at the top of the barrel– can be used to handle excess rainwater (overflow) or to connect several rain barrels together.*
- *Stand or blocks for raising the rain barrel two feet or more. Elevation is essential for water pressure through a hose.*
- *Screen over rain barrel opening – to catch debris from the roof.*

*NOTE: Mosquito dunks are recommended, since there will be standing water in the bottom of the barrel for most of the year.*



## **RAIN BARREL SELECTION AND PLACEMENT:**

### **1. Where will you place the rain barrel?**

- Rain barrels are useful near downspouts – home, garage, or shed, especially near garden beds and potted plants.
- Choose a location that will capture rainwater that would otherwise leave your property.

### **2. What is your budget?**

- Rain barrels range in cost from \$70 to \$250 or more, depending on style and shipping.

### **3. What type or style of rain barrel is best?**

- The choice is yours! Many garden centers and hardware stores now sell rain barrels.
- Many choices are available through internet purchase. Shop around!

### **4. Do you want a rain barrel with a removable lid?**

- Barrels with removable lids are very useful for dipping out water and easy for clean out. Remember: rain barrels need to be cleaned out in the fall and kept empty.
- If you have small children, choose a model with a locking lid or a child-safe grate.

### **5. What will you use as a base (foundation stand) for the rain barrel?**

- Rain barrels need to be elevated on a strong, flat foundation. Special stands are available for purchase, or you may use cement blocks. A 60 gallon barrel, when filled, weighs over 500 pounds so the base must be strong.
- If you plan to use a hose for drip irrigation, elevate the barrel at least 2 feet.

### **6. Is one rain barrel large enough?**

- Manufactured rain barrels come in different sizes, including ½ barrel size (30 gallon), full barrel (60 gallons), or over-sized barrels (80 gallons.)
- Most rain barrel models can be linked together through the overflow ports.

## **RAIN BARREL INSTALLATION:**

### **7. Every rain barrel is different; read the directions carefully, and make a complete plan before installation.**

### **8. Do you have the materials (metal anchors, especially), to attach (or reattach) the downspout to a wall or flat surface?**

- Use flexible downspout material, as necessary, to connect the downspout to the barrel.
- Downspouts that “hang free of a solid surface” are vulnerable to wind damage.

### **10. Will you need a downspout filter or diverter?**

- Rain running off of your roof may pick up small metal particles from shingles... and/or organic debris from the gutter. Small fragments flow into the rain barrel, even when screens are used. Adapters to TURN OFF the flow into the barrel are Downspout filters, designed to divert the first flush, are also available.

### **11. Where will you direct the overflow water from the rain barrel?**

- An extension hose attached to the overflow port may be useful.

## **RAIN BARREL USE AND MAINTENANCE**

### **12. May I use my rain barrel water with a hose attachment?**

- Yes, but remember that the water pressure is low. You will not be able to water plants with a hand-held hose raised above the ground. (Drip irrigation works, however).

### **13. Is West Nile Virus or other insect related diseases a public healthy concern?**

- In Southeast Oakland, the use of “dunks” (tablets of the BT pesticide) help prevent mosquitoes from breeding. Note: screens do not prevent mosquitoes completely.

### **14. May I use the rain water in my barrel to top off my fish pond?**

- No. Rain barrel water should NOT be used in fish ponds because of the toxic chemicals that may leach from roofing materials and harm fish and other aquatic life.

### **15. May I use the rain water from my barrel to water vegetables?**

- YES. Water vegetables at the base of the plant.
- Fragments of roofing materials will be captured by the soil.

### **16. How often should I empty and cleanout my rain barrel?**

- Cleanout twice a year is recommended: (1) in late spring (after pollen season is over); and (2) late fall, before storage.

### **17. What happens if I don't clean out my rain barrel?**

- Over time, rain barrels may develop an unpleasant “rotten egg” odor – resulting from accumulated debris. If this happens, empty the barrel and clean it out completely. Then clean out your gutters before the next rain event.

### **18. Where should I store my rain barrel in the winter?**

- Store empty rain barrels in the garage – or turn them upside down outside, preventing rainwater from flowing into the barrel and freezing.

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## **SOURCES OF RAIN BARRELS:**

- Local hardware stores and building supply stores (check websites as well as retail outlets)
- **Paresh Rana** makes/sells rain barrels in SE Oakland County; made from recycled plastic. Telephone: 248-703-1003; [www.rainbarrelsrus.com](http://www.rainbarrelsrus.com). Email orders: [prana73@ameritech.net](mailto:prana73@ameritech.net)
- **George Nowsch** makes rain barrels and compost tumblers from recycled 55 gallon barrels. Telephone: 231-690-0036; email: [geobuildit@yahoo.com](mailto:geobuildit@yahoo.com). Order by e-mail; will be delivered.

### **Websites: (many choices available...shop around!)**

Rain Barrel USA – 704-843-1581. <http://www.rainbarrelusa.com>

Spruce Creek Rain Saver – 800-940-0187 <http://sprucecreekrainsaver.com/contact.html>

Gardener's Supply Company – 888-833-1412 [www.gardeners.com/](http://www.gardeners.com/)

Green Culture/Water Saver: 877-204-7336 [www.watersavers/cp](http://www.watersavers/cp),

Aqua Barrel: 301-253-8855 [www.aquabarrel.com/](http://www.aquabarrel.com/)

Clean Air Gardening: [www.cleanairgardening.com/rainbarrels.html](http://www.cleanairgardening.com/rainbarrels.html)

Rain Barrel Source. Com: 866-912-9719 [www.rainbarrelsource.com](http://www.rainbarrelsource.com)

Home Depot: 800-430-3376 [www.homedepot.com](http://www.homedepot.com)