

Tips and Wisdom

1. **Choosing an Installation Location.**

When deciding where to install your rain barrel, directly under a downspout would be ideal but keep in mind where you would like to have water for your gardens or lawn. For locations far from a downspout, use an automatic rainwater diverter with an extension hose. Also keep in mind that rain barrel water is gravity fed, therefore an elevated location is ideal. Use concrete blocks, patio blocks or something sturdy to elevate your barrel, 16" or 2' is ideal. As a full rain barrel is quite heavy (450 lbs) make certain that your barrel is level and will not rock or move.

2. **Cleaning of the barrels.**

Clean the inside of new barrels with a brush and a very weak hypochlorite solution (3/4 cup Clorox per gallon of water). Rinse barrel after scrubbing and dispose of rinse water properly.

3. **Painting rain barrels.**

Barrels can be painted to reflect personal taste or to better blend into the landscape or architecture. Paints must be able to withstand climate conditions and be compatible with the barrel material. Barrels should be primed with a plastic spray paint, such as Krylon Fusion.

This paint can be used as the final coat but should be covered with a clear weather resistant coat, or the barrel can be painted with your house paint as a final coat.



Painted rain barrels from Superior, WI workshops.

4. **Management of heavy rain storms.**

Rain barrels fill very quickly in a storm; the overflow must be directed away from building foundations. Please drain the rain barrel before a heavy storm. Connect a hose to the barrel's overflow port and direct the water at least 6 feet away from the building foundation. Check the hose periodically to be sure it is positioned correctly. Another option is to use a downspout diverter, such as the *Save the Rain* diverter, that manually redirects the water to your existing downspout system when the barrel is full. You may also need a flexible downspout elbow to connect the system.

5. **Winterizing rain barrels.**

Disconnect downspouts prior to the first hard freeze. Return downspout systems to original configurations or extend away from building foundations. Drain the rain barrel and turn it upside down to prevent freezing and cracking. Store hoses and mesh screens.

6. **Maintenance.**

Rain barrels operate pretty much trouble free. However, periodic checks throughout the season will ensure success – hoses can be inadvertently moved out of place during regular yard maintenance, loosening attachments. Check that lids and hoses are properly placed and attached, that hardware is functioning properly, that no yard pests have found an entrance into the barrels, and that water is being dispersed in expected locations.

Limitations

1. Rain barrels can collect a relatively small amount of water compared to the runoff from a roof during heavy storms or prolonged rain events. To handle larger volumes of water, rain barrels are best used with additional water management practices such as rain gardens.
2. Winter freezes prevent effective use of rain barrels until spring thaw.
3. Rain barrels may lack aesthetic appeal and thus extra expense might be incurred to build structures to hide or camouflage rain barrels.
4. Steeply sloping land can hamper safe placement and function of rain barrels. Some additional cost will be incurred to build concrete pads or reinforced wooden platforms that will safely bear the weight of a full rain barrel.



Save the Rain Diverter, can be connected to existing downspout



Y Diverter with flexible elbows