

Rain Barrel Maintenance

Description

A rain barrel is any type of container that is used to harvest rainwater flowing from a downspout. Rain barrels provide a source of water that is ideal for watering lawns or flowerbeds, and they also reduce the potential for negative effects of rainwater flow off of a roof. Water caught in a rain barrel is kept away from home foundations to reduce the risk of basement flooding.

Additionally, water caught in a rain barrel is kept from running to nearby rivers and streams unfiltered, thereby limiting pollution of waterways. Excess nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment that run into streams during storms are detrimental to the health of the Chesapeake Bay. Installing a rain barrel is one way for a homeowner to do their part to control runoff and erosion while also conserving water.



Required & Recommended Maintenance

Spring/Summer

- Clear gutters at least once a year and rain barrel screen as needed of leaf material, sticks, and other debris to prevent clogging and to prevent growth of bacteria.
- The water collected in your barrel should be used or drained completely at least every seven days. Mosquitos breed in standing water.
- If your barrel is in direct sunlight, algae may grow in the water. If this happens, drain the barrel and wash well with a weak bleach solution (3/4 cups of bleach for each gallon of water). Rinse the barrel afterward. To prevent algal growth, consider painting your barrel a darker color to help block sunlight.
- If you go on vacation for an extended period, make sure that your barrel's overflow ports are working properly and that they are pointed away from your house.
- **Do not** drink the water from a rain barrel.



Fall/Winter

- Rain barrels should be disconnected, drained, and cleaned before the start of the cold season to avoid damage from freezing.
- Store the barrel indoors, if possible. Turn it upside-down whether indoors or outdoors.
- Remember to reconnect your rain spout when your rain barrel is not in use to divert water away from your house.

