

# Using and Maintaining Your Rain Barrel(s)

**Initial Installation:** The rain barrel should be under a downspout where water gets taken from the gutter. You should set it up where you cut the downspout and the rain barrel is under it or where you set up a downspout diverter.

**Management of heavy rain storms:** Rain barrels fill very quickly in a heavy storm. Connect a 1-1/4 to 1-1/2 inch hose to the barrel's overflow port and direct the water at least 6 feet away from the building foundation. Note: Garden hoses can be too small, causing spillage near the house foundation. Emptying your rain barrel before any rain event will provide –dead storage, || and allow for optimal water savings. A 1/4 inch of rain on an average roof = 3 full rain barrels. That's 165 gallons! Ideally, you should have a rain barrel for each downspout of your home

**Winterizing rain barrels:** Disconnect downspout connections to the rain barrel prior to the first hard freeze. Redirect the downspout area away from the foundation of the house for the winter season. You should store your rain barrel in a covered area such as a garage or shed or you can turn it upside down during winter. Try to keep the water out because it could freeze and damage it or the fittings. After winter months, reconnect the downspout to direct water away from your foundation and to prevent erosion.

**Maintenance:** Periodic checks throughout the season should be done to make sure screens are cleaned out, hoses are well attached, and no small animals have found their way in. Regularly use water to clean out and make sure there is capacity for the rain barrel to hold water for the next rain storm. Keeping your rain barrel in a shady area to avoid algae growth, darker paint colors on your rain barrel can help this as well. Remove any debris that has accumulated on the lid that might block the screen mesh during the rainy season. Remember to routinely clean the inside of your rain barrel.

**Build a Stand For Your Rain Barrel:** Here are some links to videos that show how to build a Rain Barrel stand

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aoJNnspljq8>
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i\\_Up1dMsAGU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_Up1dMsAGU)
- <http://clean-water.uwex.edu/pubs/>

**Set Up Your Rain Barrel with a Rain Garden:** You can also set them up with rain gardens. The rain garden should be at least 10 feet from the house so infiltrating water doesn't seep into the foundation. Do not place the rain garden directly over a septic system.

It may be tempting to put the rain garden in a part of the yard where water already ponds. Don't! The goal of a rain garden is to encourage infiltration, and your yard's wet patches show where infiltration is slow.

It is better to build the rain garden in full or partial sun, not directly under a big tree. Putting the rain garden in a flatter part of the yard will make digging much easier. For example, a rain garden 10 feet wide on a 10% slope must be 12 inches deep to be level, unless you import topsoil or use cut and fill.