

BUY OR BUILD A RAIN BARREL

A rain barrel is a system that collects and stores rain water from your roof that would otherwise run off into storm drains that flow directly into nearby lakes, streams and wetlands. Rain barrels typically hold 50 to 100 gallons of water that can be used on your lawn or garden, saving approximately 1,300 gallons of water during peak summer months. Capturing rain water in a rain barrel reduces runoff that can carry pollutants into streams and rivers. Rain barrels can be purchased at local hardware stores or through special sales organized by government agencies or non-profit organizations. You can also build your own rain barrel. Community groups can purchase the supplies and offer free or low-cost workshops for residents who want to build a rain barrel.

Outcome

Buy or build a rain barrel to capture rain water and reduce runoff.

Audience

Youth (ages 14+), adults

Time

60+ minutes

Concepts

- Collecting rain water in rain barrels can help reduce runoff.
- Rain water runoff can pollute streams and rivers.
- You can buy or build your own rain barrel.

Supplies

- Materials to build your own rain barrel (55-gallon plastic drum, plastic spigots, skimmer basket, window screening, power drill)
- Internet access to get instructions for building a rain barrel.
- Resources to buy your own rain barrel.



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Preparation

Decide if you want to buy or build a rain barrel.

Procedure

- Use the Background Information to have a discussion about rain barrels. How might they fit into your landscape design? What are barriers to buying or building a rain barrel?
- Ask your group if building or buying a rain barrel is feasible. Does buying or building make more sense for your group?
- If your group decides to build rain barrels, go to www.masterwaterstewards.org for instructions.
- If your group decides to buy rain barrels, search for options at your local hardware store, Home Depot, Lowe's, Mills Fleet Farm or specialty rain barrel sellers such as Barrel Depot, Mother Earth Gardens, Cedar Hill Natives, the Recycling Association of Minnesota (RAM) or Minneapolis Rain Barrel.
- To ensure participants commit to using rain barrels, the groups should check-in periodically to share their rain water experiences, lessons learned, etc.

Discussion questions

- What did you learn about rain barrels and rain water runoff?
- How can rain barrels help lower water costs?
- Why is it important to keep water from running off of impervious pavements?
- What types of pollutants can end up in local water sources from rain water runoff?
- What were the largest barriers to installing a rain barrel? How did your group overcome these barriers?
- What are the benefits of using a rain barrel?