



What is a rain barrel?

A rain barrel collects water from the downspouts on your house. Use it to:

- Water your garden
- Water livestock and animals
- Keep water away from your house

Water from rain barrels is not safe to drink without treatment.

Use Rain Barrels to collect the rain!

Did you know?

- Pierce County receives 38-56 inches of rain per year.
- The average house's roof generates about 30,000 gallons of runoff per year.
- Rain that does not soak into the ground turns into runoff that carries pollution to our streams, rivers and Puget Sound.
- Collect rain in a rain barrel to slow the flow of runoff leaving your property

Why install a rain barrel?

- Temporarily store rain and re-use it to water your lawn and garden
- Move water away from your basement, crawl space, or foundation
- Water livestock and other animals with rainwater
- Search online for other creative ways to re-use rainwater

How to install a rain barrel:

Observe your site. Where does your rainwater go now? Are your downspouts connected to the storm drain system, or do they send water onto the ground near your foundation? The simplest place to locate a rain barrel is at an existing downspout.

Build your own rain barrel — see back page for do-it-yourself instructions. This do-it-yourself design can be completed in 1-2 hours at a cost of about \$50.

Buy a pre-built rain barrel. Many local hardware stores sell pre-built rain barrels, especially during spring and summer months. Search online for local rain barrel builders who offer delivery and installation. Rain barrel costs, depending on complexity and attractiveness, range from \$30 to \$200.

Elevate your rain barrel. Most barrels are elevated with concrete blocks to let gravity help with water pressure coming from the barrel.

Level and secure your rain barrel. A full 55-gallon rain barrel weighs over 400 pounds. Place it on a level surface and secure it to your house so it doesn't tip over.

How to maintain your rain barrel:

Prevent problems by ensuring your entire stormwater system is maintained.

- Keep gutters clean and make sure water flows to downspouts
- Make sure the rain barrel and all of its parts are securely fastened.
- Check for damage and blockage at least once a year.
- Repair any leaks and replace any damaged parts.

How to build your own rain barrel:

Tools:

- Drill
- 1-inch hole saw
- Saw with metal-cutting blade
- Heavy-duty scissors
- Needle-nose pliers or wrench
- Caulk gun
- Screwdriver
- Level

Materials:

- 55 to 90-gallon food grade, plastic barrel with lid (these can be found online or at local restaurant and food distributors, nurseries, or gardening supply stores)

The following can be purchased at most hardware stores in the plumbing section:

- 1 - 3/4" hose bib spigot (with male threads on both ends)
- 2 - 3/4" galvanized locknuts
- 2 - 1" inner diameter rubber washers
- 1 - 3/4" brass overflow valve (with male threads on both ends)
- Teflon tape
- All-purpose outdoor caulking
- Window screen mesh (to cover the top of the barrel)
- Downspout elbow (the plastic, flexible ones work great)
- Clincher strap (long enough to go around your rain barrel and attach to your house)
- 6 - 1/4 inch #6 sheet metal screws (for downspout)
- Standard hose (long enough to move overflow away from the house)

Directions

1. Drill two 1" holes with a hole saw, one at the bottom of the barrel for the spigot, another within a few inches of the top of the barrel for the overflow.
2. If there are no holes in the barrel lid, drill a hole at least as large as the downspout end. Optional: drill additional holes to allow rainwater to flow into the barrel.
3. Wrap the barrel end of the spigot three times around with Teflon tape, then screw the spigot into the bottom (spigot) hole (it should go in by hand).
4. Place the rubber washer around the end of the spigot inside the barrel.
5. Screw the locknut onto the spigot end inside the barrel securing the washer and spigot.
6. Wrap the longer end of the overflow valve with Teflon tape three times then screw it into the top (overflow) hole (it should go in by hand).
7. Repeat #5 and #6 for the inside of the overflow valve.
8. Cut the screen to match the size of the lid and secure the screen with screws or glue between the lid and the barrel to keep mosquitoes out.
9. Optional: Apply a bead of caulking around the outside of the overflow valve and spigot to form a better seal.
10. Create a level area to place the rain barrel. Optional: use concrete blocks or other method to elevate the rain barrel for better water access and pressure.
11. Cut the downspout off above the top of the rain barrel height and add the downspout elbow. Line up the elbow to allow flow into the rain barrel opening.
12. Use the clincher strap to secure the rain barrel to your house.
13. Attach a hose to the overflow to move overflow water away from your foundation.
14. Use your rain barrel! When the barrel is full during the rainy season, discharge water on dry days to make room for more rain.



For more detailed rain barrel plans go to: www.piercecountywa.org/rain_barrel