

Rain Barrels

Information for the Home Owner

Did you know that the Fox Valley area receives an average of 22.23 inches of rain over the period from April through October? All of that rain water runs off your rooftop, down your driveway, down the street and into the storm drain collecting dirt, debris, fertilizer and other harmful substances along the way. Did you realize that storm drains are not connected to the sanitary sewer systems or treatment plants so all of the water entering the storm drains ends up in our local waterways?



What can You Do?

A rain barrel is a system that collects rainwater from your roof that would otherwise be lost to runoff. Rain barrels come in a wide variety of materials, designs and colors. A common size rain barrel is 55 gallons.

By harvesting some of that rainwater, you can help the environment by:

- Reducing non-point source water pollution
- Reducing erosion from storm surges into our streams
- Reducing the treated city water used for watering lawns and gardens.

More information

Safety Considerations:

A rain barrel must be secured on a firm level surface. Water weighs 8.34 lbs. per a gallon, so a full 55-gallon rain barrel weighs approximately 460 lbs, and tipping is a risk if it is unsecured, or on uneven ground.

The water from the rain barrel should never be used for drinking, cooking, or other potable uses.

Maintenance:

Maintenance requirements for the rain barrel are minimal and consist of regular inspection of the barrel and the parts. Remove any debris that has accumulated on the lid that might block the screen mesh. You should also routinely clean the inside of your barrel to reduce algae growth.

How to Prevent Mosquitoes:

To prevent adult mosquitoes from laying eggs in the water of your rain barrel, make sure the rain barrel is tightly sealed. Do not let water accumulate on the top of your rain barrel. Some rain barrels will have a lip on the top. A drain hole can be drilled in the side of the barrel lip to allow water to escape. Some rain barrel designs include fine mesh screens. Make sure these screens fit the top of the barrel securely so that the mosquitoes are not able to get into the barrel.

In addition to trying to keep adult mosquitoes out of your rain barrel in the first place, make sure the water does not stay in the rain barrel long enough for the mosquito eggs to hatch and grow to adulthood. Try to empty the rain barrel within 2-3 days after a rain event.

Winterizing Rain Barrels:

Disconnect the rain barrel prior to the first hard freeze. Return down spouts to their regular configuration making sure to extend them away from building foundations. Drain the rain barrel and turn it upside to prevent freezing and cracking or store in a covered area like a garage. Clean and store hoses and mesh screens.



This information was taken with permission from the Rain Barrel Tip Sheet prepared with the help from students of the Fox River Academy Environmental Charter School. www.aasd.k12.wi.us/FoxRiverAcademy

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