

rainfall as a resource



The next time it rains, watch where the rain goes. Does it soak into the ground? Does it flow across a lawn? Does a downspout send it down a driveway or parking lot to the street and into a storm drain?

By collecting and storing rainwater from rooftops for lawn and garden use, rain barrels stop stormwater runoff from flowing to the nearest storm drain.

Visit your local home improvement store or shop online for rain barrels. Commercially available 55-gallon rain barrels start at around \$60.

For more tips, visit Oklahoma City's "squeeze every drop" web page at www.okc.gov/departments/utilities/squeeze-every-drop.

What are rain barrels?

Rain barrels are containers used to collect rain from the roof of a building via the gutter and downspout. The barrel should have a spigot to which a hose may be attached, and an overflow hose to direct water away from the foundation if rain continues to fall after the barrel is full. Rain barrels are often made from 55-gallon food-grade plastic barrels, although they can also be made of other materials.

Why use rain barrels?

Rain barrels help to conserve water and reduce stormwater runoff. In the summer, outdoor tasks such as watering lawns and gardens typically make up about 40% of household water use. Considering seasonal droughts, restrictions on lawn watering, and the increasing cost of water, it makes sense to use rainwater instead of municipal water outdoors. Unless it is collected, rainwater runs off impervious surfaces, such as roofs and pavement, gathering pollutants that often end up in local streams, rivers, pond, lakes, and marine waters.



Keeping and using rainwater on your property helps reduce pollution and erosion while improving local watershed health.

How do I install a rain barrel?

1. Purchase or make a rain barrel.
2. Select a location under a downspout.
3. Determine the height of the barrel.
4. Build a platform. Elevating a rain barrel a foot or so above the ground increases water pressure, which comes solely from gravity. Full rain barrels typically weigh more than 400 lbs., so the platform must be made of sturdy materials such as cinder blocks or bricks. The platform must be flat, level, and large enough to support the entire base of the barrel.
5. Place the rain barrel on the platform.
6. Cut the house downspout to fit the barrel's opening. You may connect the downspout directly to the lid opening, connect them via a flexible pipe, or simply direct the downspout to the opening in your barrel. You may also wish to install a downspout diverter, which allows you to divert water back into your downspout during winter or when you do not wish to collect rainwater.
7. Attach a hose to the overflow fitting. Use a length of hose sufficient to drain excess rainfall away from your foundation into a garden area or into another rain barrel. Keep the overflow valve open at all times.

The USEPA estimates that a rain barrel will save most homeowners about 1,300 gallons of water during peak summer months.

Rainwater Quality

Rainwater is "soft," or free from minerals and chemicals such as chlorine, fluoride, and calcium that are often present in municipal water.

Rainwater is considered ideal for watering plants, filling swimming pools, or washing cars and windows.

Rainwater Quantity

Just 1/4 inch of rainfall on a typical roof will fill a rain barrel, and a full rain barrel will water a 200 square foot garden. A good rule of thumb is that 1 inch of rain on a 1000 square foot roof yields 623 gallons of water. You can calculate the yield of your roof by multiplying the square footage of your roof by 623 and dividing by 1000.

Winterize your barrel.

1. Disconnect the diverter.
2. Completely drain the barrel. Direct the water away from the house foundation.
3. Replace the diverter with a cover or invert the diverter and reinstall.

