

<https://extension.psu.edu/why-use-a-rain-barrel?qty=1>

Why should I use a rain barrel?

Stormwater is water that does not infiltrate into the ground; it flows across the ground and impervious surfaces into streams, rivers, lakes, etc.

Homeowners can implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) to reduce the amount of stormwater leaving their property.

Installing rain barrels under downspouts is one low-cost BMP that can help reduce runoff. Rain barrels collect rainwater from rooftops during each rain event. The collected water can then be used around the landscape. You can use the water to water gardens and lawns, clean garden tools, fill fountains, extinguish campfires, etc.

Benefits of using a rain barrel

- Reduces runoff and non-point source pollution: Rain barrels will capture rainwater from the roof that would otherwise become runoff. Stormwater runoff picks up pollutants such as soil, lawn fertilizers, pesticides, trash, animal waste, road salts, chemicals, etc. and transports them to waterways. These pollutants impair waterways and can harm aquatic life and human health.
- Reduces erosion and flooding: Increased amounts of stormwater runoff increases erosion and flooding. Capturing some of the water will reduce velocity and peak flows.
- Saves drinking water resources and money: According to the US EPA, 30% of daily water use is used outdoors. Using the rain barrel's stored water around the landscape saves water resources and reduces the amount of water purchased from municipal sources.

- Good water source for plants: Rainwater is healthy for plants. It is often softer than tap water and does not contain chlorine.

Rain barrels vary in size and are suitable for homes and larger buildings. To accommodate runoff from larger rooftops, multiple barrels can be connected to capture more water. Every rain barrel should have an overflow. Be sure to direct the overflow to a garden or lawn, rather than to an impervious surface like a sidewalk or driveway. Rain barrel maintenance is minimal but important. Check parts routinely and disconnect and clean the barrel once per year. Be sure there is no exposed, standing water where mosquitoes can breed. During winter months, disconnect the barrel and store it in a shed or garage or keep the faucet open so water does not freeze causing the barrel to crack.

If you are interested in purchasing a rain barrel, check with your local Extension office, Conservation District or garden center.

If you have additional questions about stormwater, or you are just interested in learning more, you can find a full series of videos and articles in the [Penn State Extension Stormwater Basics series](#).