

# Installing Your Rain Barrel

**Required tools:** Hacksaw, tape measure, goggles, gloves, pen or pencil

**Recommended materials:** 7'-10' garden hose, concrete blocks and/or pressure treated wood

## 1. Place the Barrel

Rain barrels need to be located near a downspout and on level, pervious (water-absorbing - not paved) ground. Your rain barrel will overflow during heavy rain. Be sure you can direct overflow to pervious ground and away from your (and your neighbor's) home.

Placing your rain barrel on a stable platform will help increase water pressure and make it easier to use a watering can or bucket. Concrete blocks or pressure-treated wood work well for platforms. A full rain barrel weighs approximately 500 pounds, so make sure the platform is sturdy!

If you have a favorite watering can, adjust your platform to make sure it will fit comfortably under the spigot.

## 2. Measure and Cut

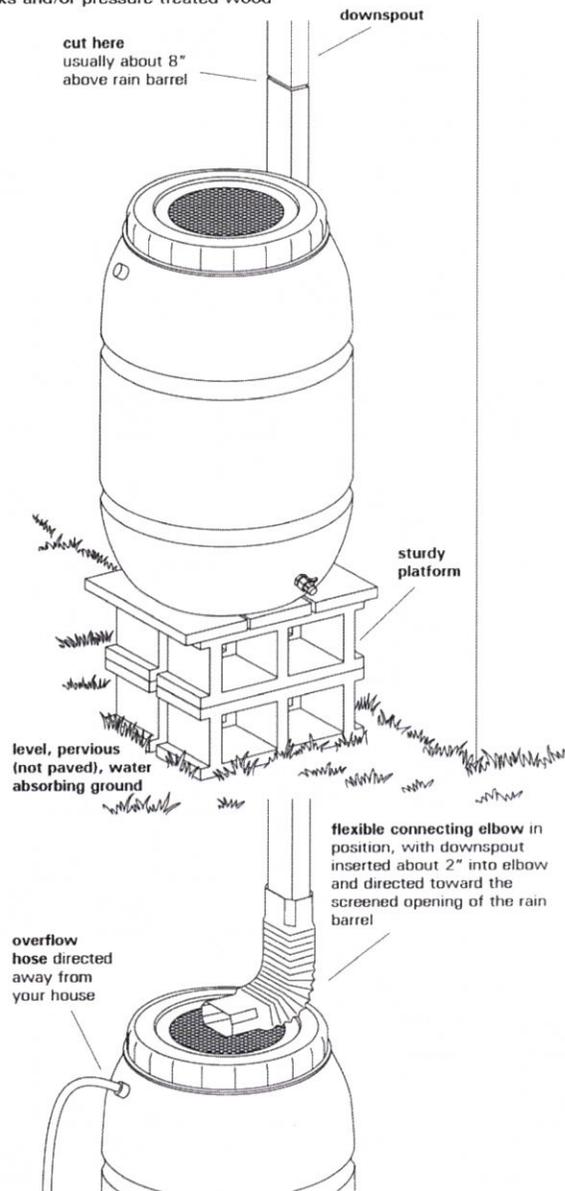
Once your rain barrel is in place, position the flexible elbow (included with your rain barrel) on the barrel and next to the downspout to determine where to cut. The elbow should be aimed at the screened opening on the top of the rain barrel, and the downspout must be inserted about 2" into the elbow. For most installations, it works well to cut the downspout about 8" above the top of the barrel. Keep in mind that the downspout will need to be inserted a couple inches into the connecting elbow. Mark the downspout with a pen or pencil where you will be cutting it.

Once you are sure where to cut, put on your safety goggles and gloves and cut the downspout with a hacksaw.

## 3. Connect

Connect the flexible elbow to the cut downspout by inserting the downspout into the elbow and positioning it so water will flow into your rain barrel. Connect a garden hose to the overflow fitting and direct it away from your house. Depending on the location of your rain barrel and your yard, this hose may need to be at least 7'-10' long.

Cap off the old downspout location on the ground to prevent it from becoming an animal's nest or clogged with debris.



**Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago**

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Disclaimer: With proper installation, maintenance and use, your rain barrel should function properly. The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago assumes no liability for the installation, maintenance or use of your rain barrel. We are not responsible for any rain barrel malfunction, property damage or injury associated with your rain barrel malfunction, property damage or injury associated with your rain barrel, its accessories or contents.

# Maintaining and Using Your Rain Barrel

You can use rain barrel water to wash your car, water your lawn, or clean work boots and tools. Rain barrel water is naturally free of chlorine, lime, and calcium, and some gardeners swear their plants prefer it.

Rain barrel water is runoff from your roof, so do not drink it or use it for bathing! Disconnect your rain barrel if you need to use a moss killer on your roof. Wait for a few rainy days before reconnecting your rain barrel to allow the moss killer to rinse away. Do not use rain barrel water on plants if your home has a copper roof or gutters.

## Oh No, Overflow!

Don't worry, your rain barrel is meant to overflow once it is full. Overflow water will spill from the opening on the top and the overflow fitting. Connect a hose to the overflow fitting to direct the water away from your house. You can also connect a second rain barrel to the first one using the included connecting hose and double the amount of water captured before it overflows.

Check on your rain barrel when it is raining to make sure the overflow is not causing flooding or flowing into your neighbor's property. If your rain barrel is properly installed on a pervious surface, overflow water should be absorbed into the ground. If you see water pooling on your property, consider installing a rain garden, which is a type of landscaping designed to absorb water.

## Regular Maintenance

Regularly check your gutters, downspouts, rain barrel water intake screen, rain barrel mosquito screen and rain barrel spigot for leaks, obstructions or debris. Also, confirm that the lid is secure so children and animals cannot fall into the rain barrel.

## Winterizing

Drain your rain barrel before temperatures drop below freezing and keep the spigot open in the winter so water does not accumulate and freeze.

You can also turn it upside down or bring it inside to ensure no water accumulates in the barrel.

## Preventing Mosquitoes

Your rain barrel comes with a mosquito-proof screen under the lid. When the mosquito netting is intact, and there are no leaks where mosquitoes can enter the barrel, your rain barrel should be mosquito-free.

Remove accumulated water from the top of the barrel every 3-4 days during the rainy season. Mosquitoes need at least 4 days of standing water to develop larvae.

If you believe mosquitoes may be breeding in your rain barrel, empty it completely and let it dry out to kill all mosquitoes.

If you want to customize the appearance of your rain barrel, you can

## Paint Your Rain Barrel

Follow these steps to paint your rain barrel:

1. Wash it thoroughly with soapy water to remove any dust or dirt.
2. Once the barrel is dry, apply a plastic primer designed to adhere to polyethylene plastic. Follow the instructions for the primer, including safety precautions.

Note: Don't skip this step. Primer is important! Paint will not stick to a rain barrel without primer, and house paint primers will not adhere well to rain barrel plastic.

3. Gently buff the primer surface with fine sandpaper to remove any glossy areas.
4. Paint the barrel with artist's acrylic paint. Acrylic paint is durable and won't chip or crack as easily as other paints.
5. Allow several days for the paint to dry completely and apply a clear spray sealant to protect your artwork. Follow the instructions for the spray sealant, including safety precautions. This will protect your work of art from the elements.