



“Do it yourself” WATER BARREL

Using a barrel to catch the water flowing from eaves troughs is one of the simplest, cheapest ways to conserve water and divert it from the storm sewer system. And if your city or town bans watering during times of dry weather, it may be the **ONLY** way to avoid having to watch your garden wilt.

Rainwater is oxygenated, unchlorinated (chlorine is bad for soil bacteria, not to mention our air), and warmer than tap water, qualities that actually make it a better source for plants and safer for the environment.

If you use a rain barrel, or if you're planning on it, make sure it's childproof. To be safe for kids, rain barrels need to have a secure lid.

Plastic barrels are used for shipping and storage of nice things like chutneys and olives, and not-so-nice things like pesticides and heavy-duty detergents. Sometimes, the outside of a barrel will tell you what it contained, but there's no guarantee it hasn't been refilled with something else. Know where your barrel comes from and make sure it's clean.

As you probably realize, setting up a rain barrel is simple. (If you rent, you'll want to check with your landlord first, naturally). However, newly built buildings in many cities have downspouts that connect directly to pipes that divert water right into the storm sewer system. Some cities will disconnect your downspout for free, or pay you to do it. It's a good idea to phone your city first and find out.

The downspout of the eaves trough runs from the roof right down to ground level. You'll need to shorten it enough to get the rain barrel underneath the spout. Basic tools like a hammer, a screwdriver or drill, some nails and screws, and a step stool or ladder should do the job if you don't have them, borrow.

Most downspouts are a series of aluminum tubes with tapered ends, tucked one into the other and nailed or screwed onto the building with brackets. Undo these brackets, remove the bottom section(s) of the downspout, then set up your barrel underneath and reattach the downspout to the building. Plastic tubing or flexible piping (at your hardware store) can be attached to the spout to direct water right into the barrel, or even more than one barrel at a time.