

Rain Barrels: A How-To Guide

Rain barrels collect rainwater, provide a free source of water for your yard, and reduce the amount of storm water runoff that enters the South Saskatchewan River. With 270 mm of rainfall from April through October, and a roof area of 1000 square feet, you can fill a 45-gallon rain barrel 150 times. Rainwater is not potable.



Choosing a Rain Barrel:

Regardless of size, colour, and material, a barrel should be sealed and equipped with:

- An overflow mechanism to redirect water to plants or another barrel once it is full.
- A drain (tap/spigot) near the bottom to attach to a garden hose or to fill a watering can.
- A screen to cover the lid and overflow mechanism. This keeps debris from entering the barrel and prevents mosquitoes from laying their eggs.

Installation Tips:

1. Redirect a down spout from your rain gutter to the top of your rain barrel.
2. Place the rain barrel on a stable, secure surface, approximately 1.5 m (5 feet) away from your house. The barrel will be heavy when full and if it overflows you do not want water damaging your (or your neighbour's) foundation.
3. Elevate the rain barrel so gravity will help move water through a hose and allow enough space to fit a watering can.

Rain barrel maintenance:

- Keep the barrel free of debris and rinse as needed to remove any algae growth.

When cold weather arrives:

- Completely drain the rain barrel of water, remove taps and overflow mechanism if they are not permanently affixed and place barrel in a protected area.

Sources:

- City of Calgary: <http://www.calgary.ca/UEP/Water/Pages/Water-conservation/Lawn-and-garden/Water-wise-gardening-and-plants/RainBarrel.aspx>
- City of Chicago: http://www.smgov.net/uploadedFiles/Departments/OSE/Categories/Urban_Runoff/Install_Maintain_RainBarrel.pdf

For more information:

Contact environmental.services@saskatoon.ca or (306) 975-2487.

