



# Frequently Asked Questions about Stormwater: Rain Barrel FAQs



## **Are rain barrels really going to make a difference?**

Yes, any amount of stormwater that stays on your property is beneficial. If 100 homes in your neighborhood uses one rain barrel, approximately 130,000 gallons of stormwater can be saved each year.

## **How long does it take to fill my rain barrel?**

It depends on how much roof area drains into your barrel, the average roof area that drains into a single downspout is 300 sq ft (30 ft by 10 ft). With this average area, it only takes 0.3 inches of rainfall to fill one 55 gallon barrel.

## **Is the rain barrel water safe to drink?**

No, to water is not safe to consume.

## **Will mosquitoes breed in my rain barrel?**

Mosquitoes need at least 10 days of standing water to reproduce. Regular use of your rain barrel will make the mosquitoes unable to thrive. Use of screens or enclosed tops will also make it difficult for mosquitos to infiltrate.

## **Why is rain water better for my plants?**

Rainwater is better whether you are in the city or using well-water. The tap water contains chemicals and additives that makes it healthy for human consumption, but these are not healthy for plants. The well-water often has minerals and other deposits that build-up and affect plant growth. Rainwater contains nitrates which is a vital ingredient to plant health and growth.

## **Will the water become stagnant if I don't use it right away?**

Rainwater needs organic material, such as leaves or twigs, to stagnate. This organic material will cause bacteria and other microorganisms to grow. Keep your gutters clean and the screen on your rain barrel secure to prevent debris from entering.



### **Are there ways to disguise rain barrels?**

Yes, there are many ways to disguise them. Some people prefer to paint or decorate them as a showcase. If you would rather hide them, many use decorative fences, bushes, and some plant native vines on a wire fence. The possibilities are endless.

### **When should I disconnect my rain barrel in the fall?**

Disconnect your rain barrel before the first hard freeze. If you do not, the freeze may break the barrel or other parts like the spigot. This time varies depending on where you live.

### **When should I reconnect my rain barrel in the spring?**

You should reconnect after the first good rain of the spring. This rain will flush much of the debris in the gutters and roof which will lessen the amount entering the rain barrel in the spring.

### **How do I clean the inside of the rain barrel?**

We recommend washing the barrel when disconnecting it for the season. Use an environmentally friendly solution of 2 tsp. of castile soap + 2 tsp. vinegar or lemon juice per gallon of water for cleaning, swishing the solution around inside the barrel then rinsing the inside of the barrel with a garden hose. A concentrated spray nozzle will work well to remove residue from the inside of the barrel.

### **Why should my rain barrel be elevated?**

The barrel utilizes gravity to push the water out, an elevated barrel provides a better flow. The barrel pressure will not be near the pressure of a normal hose.

### **Why does the spigot need to be near the bottom of the barrel?**

The spigot should be no more than 3 inches from the bottom of the barrel. This is to ensure you can access as much of the rainwater as possible.

### **Additional Resources**

<http://www.pioneergutters.com/rain-barrels/faq-about-rain-barrels>

<https://rainreserve.com/faq.php>

<https://www.allianceforthebay.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/ACB-Rain-Barrel-Frequently-Asked-Questions.pdf>

