

COLLECTING *Rainwater*

A GUIDE TO RAIN BARRELS



*Collecting
rainwater
conserves
water
and
helps
reduce
stormwater
runoff.*

For centuries, rainwater has been collected as a way for people and communities to meet their water needs. Today, this simple technology is still in use – most often for controlling stormwater runoff and conserving water.

What is a rain barrel?



Cypress Designs - 95 gal

A rain barrel is a container that collects and stores rainwater – usually from rooftops and downspouts. Rain barrels

Why use a rain barrel?

Collecting rainwater is an easy way to conserve water – and save money on your water bill. During the drier season, when water consumption in Bellingham often doubles, using collected rainwater also reduces the strain on the city's water supply and keeps more water available for fish and wildlife. Rainwater is also naturally "soft" and free of minerals and chemicals, making it ideal for plants and lawns.

Did you know? Larger rainwater catchment systems are called cisterns or tanks. They can range in size from 250 to 15,000 gallons!

typically range in size from 55 to 95 gallons and can be used alone or grouped together in connected sets. Ready-made rain barrels can be purchased locally, ordered online or you can build your own. Homemade rain barrels are most often made from empty 55-gallon, food-grade drums.

Using a rain barrel to collect rainwater also helps reduce stormwater runoff that might otherwise run down storm drains and into our streams, rivers, lakes and bays. Stormwater runoff can cause flooding and erosion, and carry pollutants into our waterways.



Yvonne Dean - 55 gal

R A I N B A R R E L Maintenance



Use
rainwater
to water
your lawn,
garden
or
indoor
plants,
fill an iron
or wading
pool
– or even
wash
your dog!



Rain barrels are low tech and low maintenance, but there are a few things you will want to do to keep your rain barrel(s) working properly:

Lisa Meucci



- Check your rain barrel on a regular basis to make sure all openings are clean, free of debris and flowing freely.

- Cover the intake hole with a plastic grate or skimmer basket covered with a nylon stocking or fine mesh screen to prevent debris, mosquitoes or other bugs from getting inside your rain barrel.



Joyce Jimerson

Todd Edison & Carrie Blackwood



- During severe rain storms, check your rain barrel to make sure the overflows are working properly.

- During months when temperatures are below freezing, you might want to disconnect the barrel from the downspout to avoid the

formation of ice which can damage your rain barrel. Avoid repeated freezing and thawing as this can weaken your barrel.

Cypress Designs - Anitra Accetturo



- Consider draining your rain barrel for the winter. Store upside down so ice doesn't form inside and crack the barrel.

Joyce Jimerson



RAIN BARREL

Safety Tips



Joyce Jimerson

- Only use *food-grade* barrels.
- Avoid collecting rainwater from roofs that have been treated with chemicals (ie. moss killers, zinc strips, etc.).
- Never use your rain barrel water for drinking or washing. If you choose to use collected rainwater for growing edible fruits, vegetable or herbs, always rinse with tap water before consuming.



Christine Morris

- Mosquito control is important due to West Nile Virus. You can also help prevent mosquitoes from breeding by placing a tablespoon of vegetable oil in your barrel. More information on mosquito control can be found at www.pep.wsu.edu.
- Be sure to place your rain barrel(s) on a strong, sturdy, and flat base.



Todd Edison & Carrie Blackwood

Did you know a full 55-gallon rain barrel can weigh 450 lbs.!

Unpainted



Cypress Designs - Anitra Accetturo

Painted



Cypress Designs - 95 gal



Duane Jager - 55 gal x2

Rain Barrel

EVERY DROP COUNTS!



rain • rainwater • rainwater harvesting
collecting rainwater • rainwater collection
rain barrels • cisterns
rainwater catchment systems

City of Bellingham Water Conservation
www.cob.org/services/environment/conservation

WSU/Whatcom County Extension
www.whatcom.wsu.edu/ag/compost

The RE Store
www.re-store.org

Department of Ecology: Rainwater Collection in Washington State
www.ecy.wa.gov/PROGRAMS/wr/hq/rwh.html

Harvest H2O
www.harvesth2o.com/index.shtml

Rainwater Catchment for Dry Lands
www.harvestingrainwater.com/

EPA Water Sense
www.epa.gov/watersense/

H2Ouse
www.h2ouse.org/

American Rainwater Catchment Systems Association
www.arcsa.org

Check
online
or
visit
your
library
for
more
info.



City of Bellingham – Public Works Operations
(360) 778-7700 – waterconservation@cob.org
www.cob.org/services/environment/conservation



WSU Whatcom County Extension
(360) 676-6736 – whatcom@wsu.edu
www.whatcom.wsu.edu/ag/compost



The RE Store
Used Building Materials and More
(360) 647-5921 – jasond@re-store.org
www.re-store.org



Michael Costelloe