

What to Buy

MAKING YOUR OWN

Type of Barrel

Almost any container, including garbage cans, can be made into a rain barrel. However, if the barrel is not designed to continually hold the weight it will quickly warp. The best barrels for making your own water catchment system are plastic food grade barrels or large wooden barrels.

Colours of Food-Grade Barrels

Plastic food-grade barrels are coloured depending on what they used to contain. The most common home-made barrel colour is blue, because it used to hold non-toxics such as soap. White barrels (previously holding food) can also be used but will start to grow algae in direct sunlight. Whatever barrel you use, remember to clean it thoroughly.

Additional Barrels

Connecting more than one

Water likes to be as low as possible. You can connect barrels via a hose at each faucet. The water will travel between the two barrels, remaining at equal levels. This is true no matter how many barrels you choose to connect. Hose adapters are available at many local hardware stores selling rain barrels.

Remember to be Safe

- » Water is heavy. Make sure that your **rain barrel is strong enough** and that it is securely supported.
- » Make sure **it has a secure lid** to prevent children and animals from getting inside.
- » Make sure all openings are **covered with screens or netting** to stop mosquitoes from breeding and debris from clogging up your barrel or tap.
- » **Don't drink the barrel water**, it could contain harmful bacteria.



For more information, check out the "Landscape Guide to Water Efficiency" on the Resources page at NewNormalCowichan.ca

Summer drought is the 'new normal'. So is managing our water supply better. This brochure series offers tips and tools to make 'living to the new normal' easier.



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Utilizing Rain Barrels



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Why Rain Barrels?

The average house roof can collect 272 litres (60gallons) of rain for each 9 square metres (100 square feet) of roof, for every 25mm (1 inch) of rain. That is hundreds of litres of water you can use in your garden every year.

Rain barrels generally have the capacity to store about 200L (50 gallons) of water. Rain water cisterns have the capacity to store thousands litres of water and are the most effective means of using harvested water for irrigation all summer long. Rain barrels, however, are a practical option when space and funds are limited. Start with barrels to see how simple and beneficial it is to collect rain water. After all, it falls free from the sky!

Rain water is better for your plants than tap water. It does not contain any chlorine and its warmer temperature will not shock the plants.



For more information on rain water cisterns, check out the Rain Water Harvesting Guidebook on the Resources page at NewNormalCowichan.ca

Installation

Make a base

Water is heavy. 1 cubic meter weighs 1000 kg at room temperature. You must build a firm, level base to **support the weight and prevent accidental tipping.** As well, you will want to raise the barrel high enough to fit a watering can under the faucet. The higher you place your barrel, the **better the water pressure and flow.** Cinder blocks or bricks on a gravel base is easy and safe.

Cut your downspout

Before you cut your downspout, measure the height of the barrel, including the base and add 1 inch. Once you have fit your barrel underneath, remember to keep the cut off downspout to reconnect to the house drainage in winter.

Overflow

During heavy rainstorms, **your barrel can easily fill and overflow.** The overflow device, located near the top of the barrel, should be used to redirect excess **rainwater away from your house** to ensure groundwater recharge. Rain barrels should be disconnected from the downspout in winter.

Downspouts

Most homes have more than one downspout. **To collect more water either add barrels to each spout** or try blocking the additional spouts for the summer.



What to Buy

COMMERCIAL BARRELS

The difference between most commercially available rain barrels is mainly aesthetic. However, always remember to look for:

Metal faucets

Whatever type of rain barrel you buy, wood or plastic, you will want to make sure that the faucet is made of metal. Plastic faucets can easily break off.

Netting over holes

All openings on your barrel must be covered with thick netting. Standing water is a breeding ground for mosquitoes. As well, small objects such as pine needles can easily clog the faucet.

Secure lid

If you can open the top of your barrel, make sure that it has a locking lid to prevent children or wildlife from gaining access. This will prevent contamination and accidental drowning.