

RAIN BARRELS



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER
WATERSHED DISTRICT

A rain barrel is a system that collects and stores rainwater from your roof.



Photo: FCMP Outdoor

A rain barrel will save money and water by collecting and using water that would otherwise be lost to runoff and diverted to storm drains. This effective and low-tech conservation tool provides a free source of water for your flowers, shrubs, trees, and gardens. When you use a rain barrel for your outdoor watering needs you reduce the demand on clean drinking water. Rain barrels also help reduce and slow the flow of runoff during storms.

A rain barrel is typically a 55-gallon drum and includes a screen, an overflow pipe, and a spigot near the bottom of the barrel. Rain barrels are often made of plastic, metal, or wood.

Anatomy of a Rain Barrel

Downspouts carry water from the gutters to the rain barrel for storage.

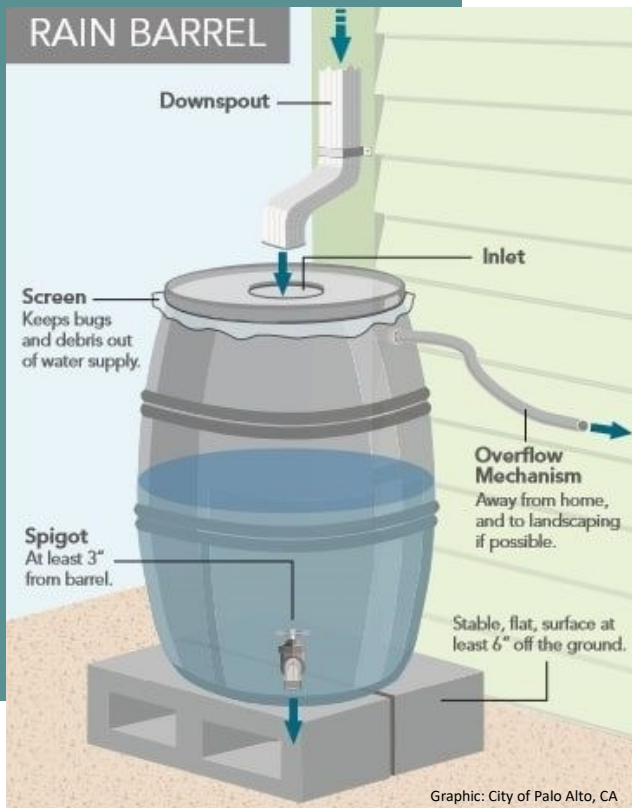
Water enters the rain barrel through the **inlet**.

The **screen** of the rain barrel keeps debris and insects out of the water supply.

The **overflow mechanism** releases excess rainwater. It should direct rainwater into pervious surfaces like gardens for irrigation or can be connected to adjacent rain barrels.

The **spigot** allows access to the water stored in the barrel.

Our friends at MWMO have more information on rain barrels on their [website](#).



Graphic: City of Palo Alto, CA

Rain Barrel Basics



Installation

If you have gutters and downspouts you can either:

- cut your downspout so water pours directly into your barrel or,
- install a diversion piece that directs water to the barrel while keeping your downspout in place. Diverters can often be found at your local hardware store.

If you don't have gutters and downspouts you can still direct water into a rain barrel. You can place your rain barrel under the roof's drip line or use a rain chain that hangs from the roof edge and into your barrel.

Maintenance

- Inspect the inlet area occasionally to remove debris, algae growth, or any other obstruction from the surface.
- Clear downspouts, roof gutters, screens, overflow outlets, and filters on your barrel in the spring and fall to prevent clogging.
- Disconnect and empty your rain barrel once frost occurs at night. Freezing water may crack your rain barrel.

The LMRWD has cost-share available for rain barrel projects. Contact the LMRWD for more information!

- Once a year, clean any debris or buildup that may have accumulated inside your rain barrel with a non-toxic cleaner.
- Repair leaks or holes immediately.

The LMRWD is a local, special-purpose unit of government that works to solve and prevent water-related issues. Visit our website and follow us on social media!



www.lowermriverwd.org



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