

POLK COUNTY FACTSHEET

RAIN BARRELS

Have you ever wondered how much water runs off of your roof? During a typical rain storm producing one inch of rain, over 1,000 gallons of water will run off a 2,000 square-foot roof. Consider the cumulative effect of all of that stormwater runoff to our lakes, rivers and waterways, and how much water could be collected!

Collecting rain water

The cost of a rain barrel system is minimal, and will pay for itself in water savings in a short time. The volume of water you can collect depends on how much it rains and the size of your roof. The rain barrel will replenish its water supply each time it rains, and to collect even more rainwater you can link multiple barrels together. By using a rain barrel you can capture this valuable resource before it is lost to runoff.

There are no health department regulations for rain barrels, and they are legal under the 2009 legislative senate bill SB2080, Florida Friendly Landscaping. They require very minimal maintenance.

Choose a location for your rain barrel where it is easy to collect water from a gutter or valley in the roof. Be sure to secure your barrel properly on a level surface and keep it away from stairs where young children may climb up and fall in.

Elevating your rain barrel will make it easier to attach a hose or place a watering can under the spigot. You can also paint your rain barrel or hide it behind plants or fencing to make it more



PHOTO BY: ANNE YASALONIS

attractive. A rain barrel is an inexpensive and easy way to start conserving water and preventing stormwater runoff pollution in your own yard.

Advantages of rain barrels

- Landscape irrigation makes up approximately 50% of total household water use. A rain barrel collects water and stores it for when you need it most—during periods of drought—to water your plants, wash the car, or fill the pool.
- A rain barrel can save a homeowner at least 1,300 gallons of water during peak summer months. Saving water means saving money, conserving energy and protecting Florida's water supply. Diverting rain water from storm drains also decreases the impact of stormwater runoff to lakes, ponds and water bodies.

- Use your rain barrel in areas of the yard where you may not have access to a spigot. Keep your compost pile moist using rain water, and use your compost in your rain barrel to make compost tea. Make compost tea by filling an old pillowcase or tea towel with compost and letting it seep in the rain barrel overnight. This is a great fertilizer for your landscape plants.

- Connect a soaker hose to your rain barrel to water your landscape plants. You can also put a small pond pump in your rain barrel and attach a micro-irrigation system to water containerized or landscape plants.



A POND PUMP CAN BE USED TO INCREASE WATER PRESSURE AND RUN A MICRO-IRRIGATION SYSTEM.

- Collecting rainwater in a barrel directs water away from the foundation of your house, preventing mold, rot and insect problems.

- Connect your rain barrel to your air conditioner condensate line to collect water. You could easily fill a 55-gallon drum in one week.



A RAIN BARREL COLLECTS CONDENSATE FROM AN AIR CONDITIONER UNIT.

Mosquito prevention with rain barrels

Recent concern over mosquitoes and the viruses they carry has many people looking for ways to reduce mosquito populations in their landscapes. It is important to use a covered rain barrel instead

of an open container to collect rain water. They need to be tightly sealed with a lid or screen to prevent mosquitoes from breeding.



A RAIN BARREL WITH A TIGHTLY SEALED LID AND SCREEN .

Where can I find more information?

Contact the [Extension Service](#) for more information on rain barrels or to attend a workshop on how to construct a rain barrel. You can purchase rain barrels at our educational workshops. Remember that if you purchase a drum to construct your own rain barrel, it must be a food grade drum.

Download Rain Barrels, A Homeowner's Guide http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/publications/files/rain_barrels_guide.pdf

For more information on mosquito prevention around your landscape:

EDIS document—Florida Container Mosquitoes <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in851>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Zika, Mosquitoes, and Standing Water" <http://blogs.cdc.gov/publichealthmatters/2016/03/zikaandwater/>

Or, Call the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program:

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