



How to Install and Use Your Rain Barrel

There are many excellent sources of information available on the Internet concerning how to install and use a rain barrel. The following is not meant to be an exhaustive instruction on how to install and use a rain barrel; rather, it is a distillation of some of the more salient points you will find on the Internet. Please read this whole paper and gather any additional information you deem necessary before attempting to install your rain barrel.

Choose the best location for your rain barrel

Choose a location next to one of your rain gutter's downspouts that is also close to the plants and garden you water most during the winter months. These might be plants that are protected from, and therefore do not benefit from, the rain; and/or are plants with short root systems that do not benefit much from the deep watering you might get from heavy rains.

- This is also a good time to consider redirecting your other downspouts into your yard (but away from your home's foundation) where the rainwater can soak into the ground. This provides deep watering for trees and prevents the unimpeded flow of water into the street and down the storm drain and into to Long Beach coastal zone.

Have a strong foundation upon which to place the rain barrel

Make sure the bottom of the rain barrel is at least a few inches higher than the surrounding landscape, so the barrel can be completely drained of water when you open the spigot.

When filled with 50 gallons of water the rain barrel will be extremely heavy: weighing over 400 pounds! So make sure the barrel is installed on a very level, strong and stable surface.

Connect your downspout to your rain barrel

A brief description of the steps needed to redirect water from the downspout to the rain barrel are listed below. But many people will find it more instructive to watch one or two of the many helpful videos available on the internet.

Installation

1. Have a level, strong and stable foundation, of the appropriate height, upon which to place the rain barrel, under the downspout you have selected.
2. Saw the downspout above where the top of the rain barrel will be, leaving room for the downward-sloping elbow to be attached.
3. Attach a downspout elbow to the end of your downspout so that water from your downspout is directed into the rain barrel through the plastic screen vent on top.
4. Place your rain barrel under the downspout elbow.
5. Adjust your downspout so it is slightly above the barrel's mesh screen or gently resting on the screen. The downspout does not fit into the barrel or have a specific place on the barrel.

6. Attach a hose to the spigot and to the overflow hole near the top-side of the barrel.

Using rain barrel water

Use the water collected in your rain barrel!

- Water your flowers, trees, and shrubs. (The rain barrel is less effective at watering the lawn.)
- Keep your rain barrel lid on tight at all times to prevent children and animals from entering or falling in, AND to prevent mosquitoes from entering and multiplying.
- DO NOT DRINK WATER from your rain barrel.

Maintaining your rain barrel

- Rainy Season (usually starting in November or December; and ending in April)
 - Most rain barrels come with overflow vents and/or hoses. Make sure the water from the overflow is directed into your landscape and away from your home's foundation.
 - Regularly check the rain barrel water intake screen, rain barrel mosquito screen and rain barrel spigot for leaks, obstructions or debris.
 - Keep your rain barrel lid sealed.
- After the Rainy Season
 - Make sure your rain barrel has been completely drained so there are no opportunities for water to become stagnant and/or a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

Don't create a mosquito habitat

Mosquitoes only need about a table spoon of standing water and 4 days to develop as larva. Make sure your rain barrel does not become a mosquito habitat!

- Make sure the screen on the top of the barrel is fine enough to prevent mosquitoes from entering and that it remains undamaged.
- Make sure there is an undamaged mosquito screen on the overflow vent or connection to the overflow hose.
- Make sure the lid forms a complete seal on the rain barrel, so there are no opportunities for mosquitoes to enter the barrel from this connection.
- Keep the lid free of organic material (leaves and such).
- During the rainy season, every 3-4 days use your hand to splash off any water that may collect on the top of the barrel (water should not collect on the lid if your overflow system is working).
- If you believe mosquitoes are breeding in your rain barrel, empty your barrel completely and let it dry out; this should kill all mosquito larvae that may be in your barrel. Then you must take the time to figure out how the mosquitoes got into the barrel and take the necessary steps to prevent a reoccurrence before allowing more water into the barrel.