

# ***Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago***

## **How to Install and Maintain a Rain Barrel**

- Placing your rain barrel
- Connecting your downspout to your rain barrel
- Using rain barrel water
- Maintaining your rain barrel
- Preventing mosquitoes

### **Placing your rain barrel**

- Choose a downspout on your house or garage that is close to the plants and garden you water most. Your other downspouts can be disconnected and directed into your yard.
- Choose a downspout where your rain barrel's overflow will soak into your own yard, and not your neighbors' property.
- Place your rain barrel on a pervious (e.g. landscaped surface that allows overflow from your rain barrel to soak into the ground. If placed on an impervious (e.g. paved) surface, rain barrel water overflow during heavy rains could pool or seep into your house or garage foundation. Make sure overflow does not go onto your neighbors' property.
- You may want to place the rain barrel on concrete blocks if you are going to use a hose to direct water to your garden (gravity will help move the water), or if you want to fill up a watering can from the spigot (so the can fits underneath the spigot).

### **Connecting your downspout to your rain barrel**

**Tools:** Rain barrel. Hacksaw. Aluminum downspouts: 6 screws and a screwdriver. PVC downspouts: PVC cement.

1. Place your barrel near the downspout you have selected and plan out how you will direct the downspout.
2. Disconnect your downspout from the sewer system by sawing the downspout above where the top of the rain barrel will be, leaving room for the 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. If you have an aluminum downspout, secure it to the elbow with screws.
5. If you have a PVC downspout, secure it to the elbow with PVC cement.
6. Place your rain barrel under the downspout elbow.
7. Optional: Attach a hose to the spigot, and/or to the overflow hole on the top side of the barrel. Make sure that the overflow is directed into your own yard

### **Using Rain Barrel Water**

- Water your flowers, trees, shrubs, and lawn.
- Wash your car or pets; rinse hands, feet, tools or muddy boots.

- Keep your rain barrel lid on tight at all times to prevent children and animals (insects) from entering or falling in.
- DO NOT DRINK WATER from your rain barrel.

### **Maintaining your rain barrel**

- Keep your rain barrel spigot closed when you are not using the water so that the rain barrel can collect water. Overflow water will spill from the black vent on the top and the overflow hole on the side near the top.
- Regularly check your gutters, downspouts, rain barrel water intake screen rain barrel mosquito screen and rain barrel spigot for leaks, obstructions or debris.
- Keep your rain barrel lid sealed.
- Drain your rain barrel before temperatures drop below freezing.
- In the winter, keep your rain barrel spigot open so that the water does not accumulate in the rain barrel and freeze. You can also turn it upside-down or bring it inside to ensure no water accumulates in the barrel.

### **Preventing Mosquitoes**

Your rain barrel should be equipped with a mosquito-proof screen under the lid and inside the overflow hole to keep mosquitoes and other insects out.

- Place your barrel on a pervious (landscaped) surface so that overflow water soaks into the ground instead of pooling on paved surfaces.
- Keep your rain barrel lid sealed.
- Keep your barrel free of organic material.
- 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. Mosquitoes need at least 4 days of standing water to develop as larva.
- If you believe mosquitoes are breeding in your rain barrel, empty your barrel completely. This will kill all mosquito larvae that may be in your barrel. If your mosquito netting is intact and there are no leaks where mosquitoes can enter the barrel, your rain barrel should be mosquito-free.

### **Disclaimer**

With proper installation, maintenance and use, your rain barrel should function properly. The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago assumes no liability for the installation, maintenance or use of your rain barrel. We are not responsible for any rain barrel malfunction, property damage or injury associated with your rain barrel malfunction, property damage, or injury associated with your rain barrel, its accessories or contents.