

Build Your Own Rain Barrel

Ever notice how happy plants are after it rains? Rainwater is free of the chemicals we use to treat water to make it suitable for drinking. Using rainwater can help reduce your water bills, and the plants love the pure rainwater. Why not capture it to use when it's not raining? Here are instructions for a low-cost, homemade rain barrel.

Parts list (store department)

- 1 heavy duty trash can with well-fitting lid (*garden*)
- 1 ½ inch faucet (*plumbing*)
- 2 ½ inch plastic washer (*hardware*)
- 2 ½ inch conduit locknut (*electrical*)
- Silicone-Kitchen/Bath/Plumbing (*paint*)
- PVC glue (*PVC*) or liquid nails (*paint*)
- Window screen (*doors & windows*)

Tools

- Utility knife with sharp blade
- Drill
- Drill bit slightly smaller than faucet diameter
- Wrench



Figure 1. Parts and tools necessary to build a homemade rain barrel.

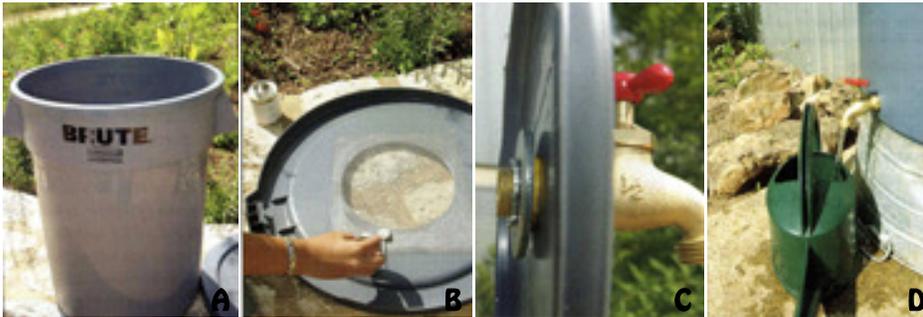


Figure 2. A) A common, heavy-duty garbage can; B) Preparing the lid; C) Preparing the faucet assembly; D) Completed rain barrel.

Instructions

1. Use a large plastic garbage can or plastic barrel with a well-fitting lid (Fig. 2-A).
2. Cut a hole 12 inches in diameter in the lid using a utility knife with a sharp blade. Turn the lid upside down. Attach a fine screen over the hole in the lid with PVC glue. This will help filter out debris and keep mosquitoes out (Fig. 2-B).
3. Drill a small hole near the base of the barrel. Be careful to test the size of the drill bit, so that the faucet will fit through the hole snugly.
4. Thread a locknut then a rubber washer onto the faucet. Insert the faucet into the hole near the base of the barrel. Place a rubber washer over the faucet threads from the inside of the barrel. Place a locknut behind the rubber washer (Fig. 2-C). Tighten faucet assembly. If necessary apply a bead of silicone inside and outside before tightening.
5. Position the rain barrel under a downspout from the roof. Elevate the barrel using cinder blocks or other sturdy base. Attach a hose to the faucet or fill a watering can to begin watering your garden with rainwater (Fig. 2-D).

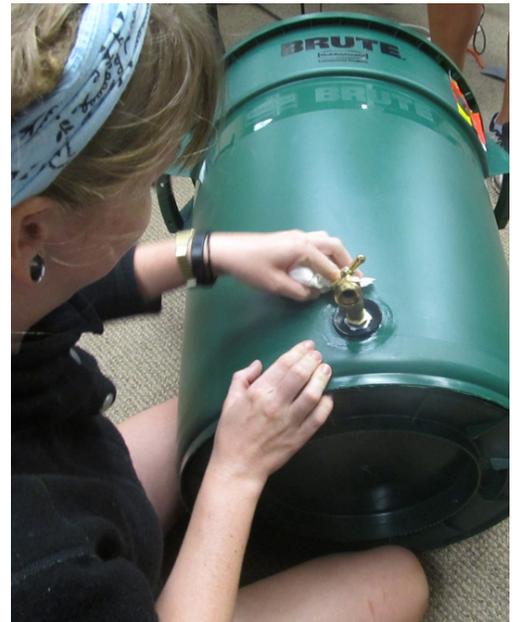


Figure 3. Inserting the faucet assembly and wiping off excess silicone from the rubber washer.

Adapted from 'How to Collect Rainwater',
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower
Center Native Plants, Fall 2005