

## The Popularity of Harvesting Rainwater

Potable water is not an infinite resource. Most municipal water comes from overstressed underground aquifers, and communities are drawing out more water than the aquifers naturally receive to recharge. People are finding ways to minimize their impact on municipal water supplies as they become aware of water shortages. More homeowners in the U.S. are harvesting rainwater to save money and conserve water in the face of rising municipal water prices and increased drought frequency.

## Rain Barrel Workshops

The EAC offers rain barrel workshops in the spring, summer, and fall. Building your own rain barrel helps you save money and use the extra water to your benefit rather than go down the storm drain. For a small fee, we provide you with a rain barrel made from a repurposed 55-gallon drum and all the information needed to begin rainwater collection. For more information, call (309)-454-3169 or contact us via email. Scheduled workshops are listed on the BN Green Events Calendar and in the EAC Action News newsletter!

## Safety & Maintenance Concerns

Water stored in any kind of container represents a risk for small children and animals. They can drown in as little as a few inches of water. Ensure all rain barrels have a secured top.

Mosquitos breed in standing water. To reduce the spread of West Nile virus, use a fine screen over the top of the barrel where the water enters and securely seal all other openings with water-proof silicone caulk to prevent mosquitoes from entering the rain barrel.

Make sure rain barrels are food-grade containers made to hold liquid. Install it on level and stable ground.

Finally, always monitor the rain barrels for overflow to avoid damage to your home's foundation.

## Rain Barrels



202 W. College Ave  
PO Box 97  
Normal, IL 61761  
(309) 454- 3169  
ecologyactioncenter.org

Find more Yard Smart  
recommendations at  
**YardSmart.org**

## Yard Smart

### How do I start?

There are many types of rainwater harvesting systems you can choose from. See which systems are in your price range and meet your home set-up needs. **You can purchase rain barrels at the EAC**, at most big box stores, and online. **The EAC also sells diverters, and other rainwater collecting supplies.**

Putting a rain barrel under gutter downspouts is the easiest way to harvest rainwater. This type of collection system can use one barrel or connect several together with PVC pipes or hose. Using a small pump to get pressurized water to your garden is another option. Bigger and more complex systems use gravity to feed water from gutters to a larger cistern, which pumps water to the landscape.

Whatever you pick, use covers to reduce safety risks, keep mosquitos out, and keep the water from accumulating leaves and other contaminants.

**The EAC offers rain barrel workshops spring through fall, complete with discounted rain barrels and all the information you need to get started. Visit [ecologyactioncenter.org](http://ecologyactioncenter.org) to learn more!**

## Tips for

### Why harvest rainwater with rain barrels?

Rainwater harvesting reduces stormwater runoff pollution from roofs and yards, conserves water, and reduces municipal water use, saving residents money. Rain barrels are beneficial for rural residents with personal wells too because rainwater is a natural soft water that is great for watering landscapes, gardens, or houseplants.

Rain barrels help to reduce stormwater pollution. When rain falls it picks up pollutants including chemicals from lawns and roads, and then washes into storm drains and on to local streams. Collecting rain off roofs diminishes the amount of rain washing out downspouts and over landscapes. Rain barrels provide a clean, ready to use water supply and helps keep pollutants out of lakes, rivers, and streams.

One of the best reasons to start harvesting rainwater is spreading the culture of rainwater collection and helping your community and the environment. It is important to remember that every living thing on the planet needs water to survive, so we must expand our idea of community to the plants and animals that surround us.

## Rain Barrels

### Safe Rainwater Harvesting Catchments

Any catchment area will pick up some leaves, bird droppings, dust, and other natural contaminants. Collected rain water is safe to use on gardens, landscaping, and house plants, but would require a quality filtration system to be safe to drink. Some roofs, such as old tar & gravel, asbestos shingle roofs, or treated cedar shakes are not recommended for water harvesting.

The type or condition of your gutters may impact the quality and safety of your harvested rainwater. Some gutter systems may have lead soldering or lead-based paints. Also, if you live near heavy industrial pollution, your rainwater itself may contain some undesirable contaminants. Talk to your local municipal government about the issue of environmental contaminants in your area that may affect rainwater quality.