

Calgary



YardSmart

# Rain barrels



Created in partnership with



Did you know, in hot and dry weather Calgarians tend to use more water outdoors, which can put pressure on our rivers and water treatment plants?

Outdoor watering can increase your home's water use dramatically in the summer. During the summer, Calgary communities see an average increase of 20 to 30 per cent because of outdoor watering activities.

Using a rain barrel helps you make use of the water that is already falling on your property. This helps our city save water and helps you reduce your water bill. Your plants will also love the soft, non-chlorinated rainwater.

## How do I choose a rain barrel?

Look for a sealed barrel equipped with:

- An overflow mechanism, such as a diverter, for use with your existing downspout
- An additional outlet and hose to redirect water to plants or trees from the barrel once it's full
- A drain or tap near the bottom to fill a watering can

You can use one barrel or set up a network of multiple barrels to increase your savings.

## Setting up your rain barrel

Locate the downspout most convenient for barrel placement. If your rain barrel didn't come with its own stand, set it on some concrete blocks or flagstones for extra stability.

### Direct, no diverter

If overflow onto the surrounding area won't lead to pooling around your foundation, cut your downspout to the right length so the open end can be redirected into the top of the open barrel. You can also add a second outlet near the top of the barrel and attach a hose to direct overflow water to a tree or garden.

### Using a diverter

If a rain barrel that overflows onto the surrounding area could pool around your foundation, install a downspout diverter. This leads rainwater into your barrel until it fills, at which point extra water is directed back into the downspout, preventing any potential problems with overflowing. Downspout diverter kits can be purchased at hardware and garden stores in Calgary.

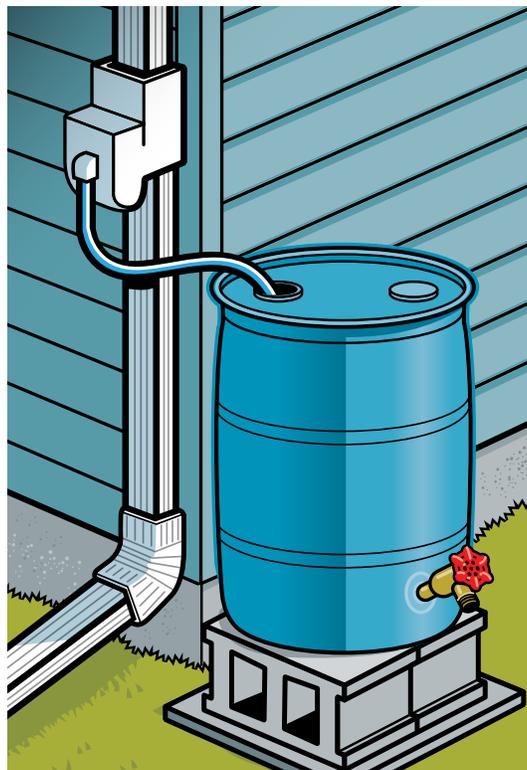
Read the installation instructions that come with your rain barrel carefully, and refer to the barrel manufacturer or retailer for support.

## Setting up more than one rain barrel

You can capture even more rainwater if you use multiple rain barrels. Place one rain barrel at the base of each of your downspouts, or connect several rain barrels in a series that fill from the same downspout. Contact your local supplier or Green Calgary for more information.



Rain barrel without a diverter.



Rain barrel with a diverter.



Multiple rain barrel set-up.

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Calgary receives an average rainfall of five centimetres or 4,000 litres of water per month during the summer. That can fill a typical 45-gallon rain barrel 20 times.

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### Maximize your water savings.

Once you've set up your barrel make sure to use rainwater regularly to maximize your water savings. Emptying your barrels regularly ensures they have the capacity to refill with the next rainfall, providing you with a steady supply.



## Seasonal maintenance checklist

### Spring and summer

Rain barrels are virtually maintenance-free during the spring and summer months. Here are some things you can do to keep your rain barrel in good working condition:

- If your downspout enters the barrel directly put a fine mesh cover over the entry hole.
- Keep the barrel free of debris that might clog the tap and rinse as needed to remove algae growth or silt build up.

### Fall and winter

A few quick actions when cold weather arrives will keep your barrel from cracking:

- Completely drain your barrel of water.
- Place barrel in an area where it will be protected from the weather and will not gather more water.
- Always remember to reconnect your downspout if it was removed in installation. Be sure to refer to the winterization instructions if you're using a diverter.

Remember - collected rainwater is not potable, which means you shouldn't drink it, nor use it on vegetable gardens. Instead, use it to water your trees, shrubs and flowers.

## Buy a rain barrel

Rain barrels are sold at many hardware stores and garden centres.

Green Calgary also sells rain barrels and offers installation tutorials, maintenance instructions, workshops and more. Visit [greencalgary.org](http://greencalgary.org) for more information.

Visit [calgary.ca/yardsmart](http://calgary.ca/yardsmart) for more information on water conservation and gardening.

