Rain Barrels

Terra Freeman
Urban and Commercial Horticulture Agent
UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County

Fun Facts:

- A ½ inch rainfall event will fill a 50 gallon barrel.
- One inch of rain on a 1000 sq. ft. of roof yields 625 gallons of water.

Benefits of using a rain barrel:

Rain water is excellent for plants; in fact, the quality of rain water is preferable to plants than water provided by a utility company because it is free from chlorine, fluoride and other chemicals and has a lower pH. Water harvested in rain barrels can be used as supplemental water for landscaped beds, trees and potted plants, or for washing gardening tools.

What are rain barrels not used for?

Rainwater may pick up roofing chemicals, algae, bird droppings or other contaminates as it sheds over the catchment area; therefore, water collected in rain barrels is not to be consumed by humans or animals.

How are rain barrels helpful to the environment?

- Rain barrels reduce the use of potable water (saving the homeowner money as well!).
- Rain barrels reduce stormwater runoff, which carries non-point source pollution such as fertilizers, pesticides, soil particles, and other contaminants.

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Components of a rain water collection system:

- Water catchment area (ex: roof of house or outbuilding).
- Conveyance system that leads from catchment area to storage tank (ex: guttering system).
- Storage tank (ex: food grade barrel).
- Filter (ex: window screen or wire mesh placed on opening of storage tank to keep out leaves and other debris).
- Water distribution device (ex: spigot at bottom of barrel to drain into a watering can or attach to soaker or garden hose).
- Overflow outlet (such as a hose or pipe) to divert excess water away from area if barrel fills up. You can link together multiple rain barrels to store even more water.

Can I paint my plastic rain barrel?

Absolutely! First, thoroughly clean the barrel to remove any debris. Next, rough up the surface with a fine to medium grade sand paper to help the paint better adhere to the plastic. Apply a coat of outdoor primer, th0+10en follow with an outdoor acrylic or spray paint. Finish with one or two coats of polyurethane.

Rain barrel safety tips:

- A 50 gallon rain barrel weighs over 400 pounds when full of water! It is important to make sure your rain barrel is on an even platform to prevent it from tipping over. For added protection, you may secure your barrel to a structure with strapping.
- Always use a screen or other type of lid to keep young children and critters from falling into barrel.
- Window screening will keep out mosquitoes, but for added protection, you may use a mosquito dunk (active ingredient is *Bacillius thuringiensis, Bt*) to kill mosquitoes and black fly larvae.

References:

Rain Barrels: A Homeowners Guide. Southwest Florida Water Management District. http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/publications/files/rain_barrels_guide.pdf

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