

## BONUS CHALLENGE #3

### Catch the Rain



Any rain and irrigation water that runs off carries soil, debris, fertilizer, and pesticides into storm drains that empty *directly* into our lakes. These substances can harm living organisms, habitats, and water quality. Reducing runoff from your property minimizes these problems. One way to reduce runoff is to catch and store the rain and use it to water thirsty houseplants, containers, gardens and lawns. Rainwater is better for plants because it is softer and devoid of the dissolved minerals and additives (like chlorine) that are present in household water.

Rain can be stored in homemade or store-bought rain barrels, which collect the runoff from your roof that flows into your gutters, and store it until you are ready to use it. Most rain barrels come with a spigot and hose hookup to allow you to remove water when you need it. All rain barrels should be fitted with some kind of mesh insect barrier to keep out debris and insects (like mosquitos) as well as some filter to collect or prevent debris from entering the barrel. If you are concerned about mosquitos taking up residence in your barrel you can use mosquito dunks to prevent breeding. You may also want to elevate your barrel on a stand or on concrete blocks to make it easier to drain your rainwater into watering cans or buckets (or squirt guns!). If you have children you will want to look for a child-resistant mechanism that locks the lid on the barrel. Also, if you find that your barrel is overflowing because you have too much rainwater, you can set up a diverter that will automatically divert rainwater to your gutters when your rain barrel is full. You can also link multiple barrels together to collect additional water.

The following businesses sell a variety of rain barrels you can choose from:

1. <http://www.aquabarrel.com/> (The owner is local and happy to answer any questions!)
2. [http://www.stadlergardencenters.com/green\\_gardens/rain\\_barrels.php](http://www.stadlergardencenters.com/green_gardens/rain_barrels.php)
3. <http://www.scottkeycenter.org/products/rain-barrels/> (supporting a good cause)
4. [Rain Barrels - Frederick Green Challenge](#)

The following resources can help guide you if you want to make your own rain barrel:

1. [How to Build Your Own Rain Barrel - Cornell University Cooperative Extension](#)
2. <http://www.familyhandyman.com/smart-homeowner/how-to-build-a-rain-barrel/view-all>
3. [Build Your Own Rain Barrel - Chesapeake Bay Foundation](#)
4. <http://www.thisoldhouse.com/toh/how-to/intro/0,,20785802,00.html>