

Make a Rain Barrel (from *Garden Gate Magazine*)

Materials:

- 1 clean 30- to 55-gallon barrel (*available free from water treatment plant or food wholesaler, just rinse thoroughly before using*) or garbage can
- 1 "S"-shaped aluminum downspout elbow
- 4 concrete blocks
- 1 piece of aluminum window screen
- 1 standard 1-in. hose spigot with 3/4-in. pipe threads
- 1 3/4-in. x 3/4-in. coupling
- 1 3/4-in. x 3/4-in. bushing
- 1 3/4-in. pipe thread with a 1-in. hose adapter
- 1 3/4-in. lock nut
- 4 metal washers
- 1 roll Teflon thread tape
- 1 tube silicon caulk

Tools:

- Hacksaw
- Screwdriver
- Pop rivet gun with rivets
- Drill
- Pencil
- Ruler
- Spade
- Level
- Adjustable open end wrench

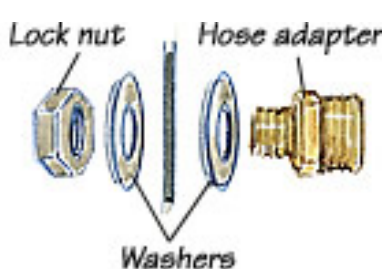


If you have gutters and downspouts on your house or garage, you have a fantastic system for harvesting soft, clear rainwater for the garden. The only missing piece is a collection reservoir, otherwise known as a rain barrel. To find one, check with companies that buy food ingredients in bulk. Some supplies come in large, seamless, plastic containers.

Scrub the inside of your container thoroughly with soap and water to remove any residues. Because they're so hard to clean out, barrels that contained motor oil or fuel products don't make good rain barrels. If you can't find these barrels, substitute a large, plastic trash can.

Level the area for your barrel with a spade, set the concrete blocks in place and level them. To measure where the downspout elbow will come out from the side of the house and direct water into the barrel, put the barrel on the blocks. Hold the new elbow just above the top of the barrel and mark where the elbow will join the downspout—about an inch above the barrel is best.

Set the barrel and elbow aside and measure down 2 inches from the mark in the downspout. This will allow the downspout to fit into the elbow with a good, solid connection. Use the hacksaw to cut the downspout, then fit the elbow on and fasten it with sheet metal screws or pop rivets.



Drill a 3/4-inch hole in the wall of the barrel. Make it high enough to put a bucket underneath. Squeeze caulk around the hole on both sides. Next, refer to the illustration at right to build the spigot assembly. Connect the spigot and coupling, and wrap Teflon tape on each of the threaded ends for a tight seal. Slip on a washer and insert the threaded end of the coupling through the hole from the outside. On the inside, put a washer over the pipe and fasten everything together with the bushing.

A couple of inches down from the top of the barrel, drill another 3/4-inch hole. Then build the overflow assembly according to the illustration at right. Squeeze caulk around the hole inside and out and place a washer on the hose adapter. Push this assembly through the hole. Slip a washer and Teflon tape on the inside threads and tighten everything together with a nut. When you connect a length of garden hose to this overflow valve, you can direct some of the overflow into the garden after a heavy rain.

If your barrel has a lid, cut a hole where the new downspout elbow will direct water into it. Cover the hole with a piece of screen to keep mosquitoes out. Finally, set the barrel back on the concrete blocks, make sure the downspout will direct water into it properly, and wait for the rain.

