



Rainwater Harvesting Projects For Your Home

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The temperatures are climbing and we have seen several really good rain showers during the month of July. Some of these storms brought an inch or more to Montgomery County. You might install a rain gauge in your garden or on a fence as a fun way to see how much rain we actually do get in this area. Summer rains present a great opportunity to talk about rainwater harvesting at home so that you can collect water for the hot months to come.

Take the challenge!

Rainwater harvesting may present some challenges especially if you do not have a rain gutter system already in place or live where there may be homeowner restrictions. If you think you are a good candidate for rainwater harvesting due to be able to use rain gutters or having no restrictions, you have a few options!

Shop around! You may want to purchase a ready-made

rain barrel, if so; you will still need to determine where you are going to place it and how to connect it so that you channel the water to where it is needed. There are a few options available locally that only require you to select your style and color, drive home and install your new landscape feature. Make your choice depending on water needs and what will make an attractive addition to your residential garden.



Want a fun project at home? Make your own rain barrel!

For a fairly small investment, you might want to consider constructing your own rain barrel. You will need to find a watertight container for collecting the rainwater. You could use an old barrel, plastic 55 gallon drum, etc. Whatever your choice, you want the inside to be clean and be safely sealed at both ends with only a small opening in the top for rainwater to prevent creating a drowning hazard or a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Do not use any container that has a large enough opening for a person of any size or stray animal to fit through. White or clear containers may allow too much sunlight inside which could cause algae to form.

Site Selection

A reminder...Depending on where you live, you may have homeowner restrictions that may either prevent or dictate the type of container or catchment that you can install. Save yourself time and headaches by finding out if there are any restrictions before you spend your time and money to complete this project. You may have restrictions that don't allow anything to be constructed in your front yard. If so, is your backyard a possibility?

Do you already have rain gutters installed to channel the water to various parts of your yard?

What you will need if you already have rain gutters installed:

You will need a flexible downspout and a hose bib/spigot available from most home improvement centers. Next you will need to drill a hole in your container about 5 inches from the bottom. The hole you drill should be the same diameter as the spigot. To make this fitting more secure, you might want to insert a PVC sleeve/connector (threaded on the inside) into the hole first and then fit the hose bib into the threaded



Photo courtesy of Paul Nelson

connector. Insert the spigot and seal around the spigot with a water proof sealant (silicone, etc.).

Safety first!

You will have to cut into your rain gutter downspout at a height approximately the same as the height of your rain barrel. Safety glasses should be worn to give you proper eye protection while making this cut. Be careful as the cut edges may be sharp! Use the proper cutting tool and associated safety measures for the material you will be cutting through. If you are unsure about this step, ask for guidance from someone at your local home improvement center.



Wear a pair of gloves as you carefully insert one end of the flexible downspout into the cut off end of your stationary downspout. Now, carefully bend the other end accordingly to empty into the top of your rain barrel. You are now ready to collect the next rainfall!

Want more information?

There are some great resources out there for learning how to complete rainwater harvesting projects. Here locally, you should definitely visit the Montgomery County Extension Office to see their demonstration garden. Looking for a great guide that will help you conceptualize, design and implement a successful and sustainable system? Check out the

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Uncut downspout and flexible downspout

book by Brad Lancaster: "Rainwater Harvesting for Drylands and Beyond, Volume 1: Guiding Principles to Welcome Rain Into Your Life and Landscape". This guide-

book will demonstrate the basic principles of designing a landscape and rainwater harvesting system to channel water through your yard in the most effective path for maximum water infiltration.

Is a standard size rain barrel not big enough for you?

Containment Solutions in Conroe has developed a 500 gallon cistern for home use. This newly developed tank can be painted which may help it to be a more aesthetically pleasing addition to your landscape if you should have any concerns along those lines. Their website is www.containmentsolutions.com

The Lone Star Groundwater Conservation District (LSGCD)

The Lone Star Groundwater Conservation District is also an excellent resource for information on rainwater harvesting. Check out our website at www.lonestargcd.org

The District funded a large rainwater harvesting project out at Memory Park. If you happen to be out in the direction of

Montgomery and visit the park, walk around the back side of the building and you will find the cistern that was installed to harvest rainwater from the roof. Also take the opportunity to walk around the rest of the site.

Rainwater harvesting at your home can be a fun and worthwhile project that can provide supplemental water for your garden and container plants. Your efforts may inspire your friends and neighbors to take on this same type of project! ♦



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