Rain Barrel 2007-09

Popular press has highlighted the global warming concerns voiced by scientists. Weather you believe there is global warming or not, we should always conserve natural resources. The most precious natural resource is water.

This past summer, we have seen drought in some states. For those of us in the dry area, watering our lawn and garden is second nature; however, watering our lawns places additional stress on our water supply.

A simple solution is to use a rain barrel to collect rain water and use it to water our lawn and garden when it's dry. According to one estimate, 1,300 gallons of water are used during the peak summer months for lawn and garden use. A two level, 2,000 square feet house has about 1,000 square feet of roof area. Every 1 inch of rain that falls on that roof, yields 623 gallons of water. In addition to money savings, the naturally soft rain water devoid of minerals, chlorine, fluoride, and other chemicals are better for lawn and plants.

How do you install a rain barrel for your home? There are many places you can buy a rain barrel and get installation instructions. Composters.com (http://www.composters.com/rain-barrels.php), Arlington Echo (http://www.arlingtonecho.net/rainbarrel.htm), and Spruce Creek Company (http://www.sprucecreekrainsaver.com/) are some internet vendors. However, before you can decide which barrel to buy and install, there are a few points to consider.

1. Make sure the barrel has a cover to avoid small children or pets getting into it.
2. Make sure you have a strong and level platform to hold the barrel. A 55 gallon rain barrel loaded with water can weight 300 pounds!
3. Place the barrel in a location for easy maintenance. Drain the water every week or so to avoid standing water becoming a breeding ground for mosquitoes
4. If you live in areas where temperature falls below freezing in the winter, make sure you can disconnect the barrel easily and store the barrel upside down.
5. Make sure the over flow drain, leads away from the foundation of the house. You don't want to have a wet basement problem.

Once you decided on the location to place your barrel, you need to plan your install. Aquabarrl has a good DIY guide (http://www.aquabarrel.com/DIY_Free/) and so doesNE-Design (http://www.ne-design.net/rain-barrel-installation.html). Some Government entities also have helpful links (http://www.dnr.state.md.us/ed/rainbarrel.html). The Student Bay Savers has put together an excellent guide (http://www.cbf.org/site/DocServer/rain_barrel_guide.pdf?docID=681)

If you are looking for a more social encounter and want to meet other conservationist, attend a rain barrel workshop. Interstate Commission on the Potomac River (http://www.potomacriver.org/about_ICPRB/rainbarrelinfo.htm), Environmental Education in Georgia (http://eeingeorgia.org/net/calendar/details.aspx?c=33276&s=54160.0.68.4863), greater Milwaukee (http://www.county.milwaukee.gov/Community9914.htm **),** and North Carolina State Univ. (http://southcentral.ces.ncsu.edu/index.php?page=events&event_id=9674) all hold rain barrel workshops. Attending a workshop is the best way to get a rain barrel at low cost, learn how to install it, and meet others that have similar interest as you.