



SOUTHEASTERN COLORADO

Water Conservancy District

"Your investment in water"

Water Wise Demonstration Garden

Rainwater Harvesting

What is Rainwater Harvesting?

Rainwater harvesting is the collection and storage of rain, instead of allowing it to run off. A common method is using rain barrels connected to downspouts. In Colorado you are allowed a maximum of two rain barrels with a combined storage of 110 gallons or less per household. Another method is creating a rain garden by diverting water from your downspouts into a bowl-shaped depression designed as a garden. This slows the flow of rainwater, allowing the water to penetrate into the soil and can help prevent flooding and erosion.



Rain Garden, SECWCD Garden

Rain Barrel Information

Used 55 gallon drums can usually be found on local marketplaces. You should only use HDPE food-grade barrels that were used for food storage and not ones that held chemicals. Any color barrel will work but white barrels placed in a sunny location will develop algae. To prevent algae growth you can add 1 ounce of bleach to the barrel each month. Wait approximately 24 hours after the addition of bleach to allow the chlorine to dissipate before using the water.

Water Pressure

Typically, rain barrels are elevated 12 to 36 inches above the ground. This creates enough pressure (2-3 psi) to move water through a spigot to fill a watering can, hose or for drip irrigation. This raised platform should be level and made of sturdy materials like cinder blocks because a full 55 gallon rain barrel weighs over 450 pounds.

Due to low water pressure it can take a long time to water a garden. If you want to automate the process you can use an irrigation timer and a soaker hose. The timer must be one that can operate at low water pressure and the soaker hose must be one specifically for use with rain barrels.



Rain Barrel Parts List

- 55 gallon HDPE drum
- Downspout diverter kit
- Brass spigot and bulkhead
- Rain barrel inlet buttress adapter

Rain barrel designs differ but this setup uses a sealed inlet to deter mosquitos and if the barrel fills during a rain storm, water will be diverted back to the downspout. The downspout diverter will screen most debris from entering the barrel.

Disconnect before winter and completely drain until risk of frost has passed.

More information
can be found on our
website:

[www.secwcd.org/
content/irrigation-
systems](http://www.secwcd.org/content/irrigation-systems)

