

Rain Barrels Save Money, Improve Water Quality

During the summer months, nearly 40 percent of household water is used for watering lawns and gardens according to the US Environmental Protection Agency. A great way to save money on your water bill and conserve a valuable natural resource is to collect storm water off of roofs in rain barrels.

Rain barrels are storage containers designed to capture storm water runoff from building roofs for use in irrigation or other non-potable applications. Rain barrels are inexpensive and easy to install from downspouts on most homes.

Rain barrels can also help improve water quality by reducing the amount of water entering Indianapolis' overburdened sewer system, helping to reduce the amount of raw sewage overflows in rivers and streams.

"Using a rain barrel can reduce the amount of water you consume, save money on water bills and help improve Indianapolis' water quality," said Kären Haley, director of the City of Indianapolis Office of Sustainability. "Rainwater collected and stored during the rainy days can then be used for watering lawns, flowers or gardens."

Once a rain barrel is connected to a downspout, water is collected during rains. With a garden hose connection and an on-off lever, the water can be used later for watering plants. The size of the barrels can range from 55 to 100 gallons.

A pre-made rain barrel can cost between \$60 and \$150 and is available at many lawn and garden centers, home improvement centers, and through various local nonprofit organizations. Some residents build their own rain barrels and learn how to install and properly maintain them by attending workshops offered by several local organizations, including Keep Indianapolis Beautiful (www.kibi.org). The Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District also provides detailed instructions on constructing a rain barrel.

In addition to rain barrels, residents can adopt many practices that help clean up and keep common pollutants out of our waterways:

- Use insecticides, herbicides and fertilizers sparingly, and don't apply them prior to rainy weather.
- Clean up your pet's waste. It can end up in our waterways.
- Use a car wash instead of washing your car in your driveway.
- Clear trash, leaves and debris from storm drains.
- Dispose of paint, motor oil and cleaning products properly. Log on to www.sustainindy.org/ToxDrop for more information.

For more information on rain barrels visit:

<http://sustainindy.org/greeninfrastructure.cfm>

