

Put Rainwater to Work for You

Harvesting rainwater is a simple way to make your household green and help your gardens prosper. Using rainwater instead of the tap to water your gardens will cut your water bill. It also keeps water from running off of your property and carrying pollutants into our streams. The two most common ways to put rainwater to work for you are rain barrels and rain gardens:

- **A rain barrel** collects water from your roof and stores it for future use. You can connect a hose to the barrel or use it to fill watering cans. Rain barrels are available commercially at home improvement stores or you can build a do-it-yourself rain barrel at little cost; see www.diynetwork.com/how-to/how-to-create-a-rain-barrel for simple instructions. Most barrels hold 55 gallons of water and will fill quickly during a storm. Make sure to include an overflow pipe to transport excess water away from your house. Also, a screen or filter on top is essential to prevent mosquitoes.



This rain barrel at the Media Community Center was painted to provide a splash of color. Rain barrels are available in many colors and can be painted to match any home.

- **A rain garden** is a collection of water-loving plants in a slight depression in the ground. Running a downspout towards a sunken garden will capture rainwater and allow it to slowly sink into the ground over the next day. Rain gardens should be located at least 10 feet away from your foundation. Their size varies based on how much roof area is draining to the garden. Resources on building your rain garden can be found many places online, including <http://www.raingardensforthebays.org> and <http://www.stormwaterpa.org/raingarden>. Pick the right spot on your property, create a design using your favorite plants, and start using rainwater to beautify your yard.