

Rainwater Harvesting

The Basics



Installing a rain water harvesting system is an easy way to reduce stormwater pollution and prevent erosion of our stream banks.

Rain barrels are containers that collect and store rainwater for later use. Several rain barrels or one larger tank (also known as a cistern) may be installed to capture additional water. Rain that is collected can be used for non-potable (non-drinking) uses such as watering plants.

Blue Water Baltimore wants to help you make a difference. This document provides a brief overview of rain water harvesting and help you get started with the selection, installation, and rebate process.

Why Should I Install a Rain Barrel, Tank or Cistern?

- Reduce water bills
- Capture rain to water your garden
- Save up to 1,300 gallons of water during peak summer months
- Decrease pollution and prevent erosion
- Lessen the demand for energy intensive, chlorinated or chemically-treated tap water

What Does it Cost?

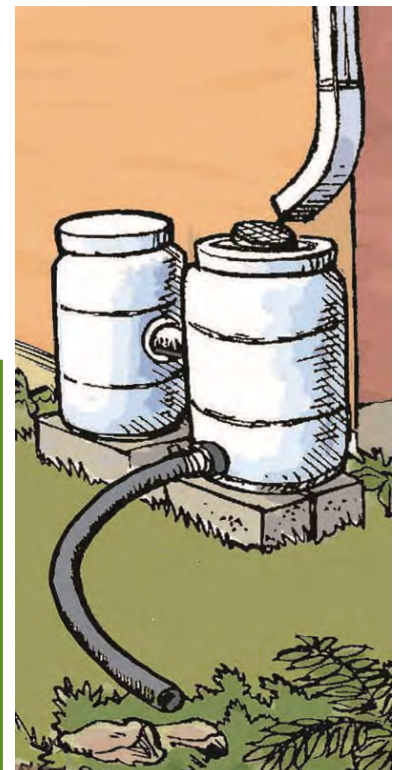
Rain barrels cost between \$75 and \$200.
Cisterns range in cost from \$1-2 per gallon.
Expect the price to be higher if your cistern is buried.

Your Auditor will help you identify a location for your barrel or cistern as well as determine how much capacity you will need based on your preferences and rooftop area.

Blue Water Baltimore provides **financial incentives** for rain water harvesting systems on properties located within the four watersheds we serve. **You can register online at www.bluewaterbaltimore.org.** See page two for more details.

You can build your own rain barrel during a Blue Water Baltimore workshop!

Interested in attending or having one in your community? Visit www.bluewaterbaltimore.org



How do I maintain my barrel?

You should clean your barrel every spring and fall. This will help reduce debris buildup and keep your barrel functioning properly.

- Drain your barrel
- Remove filter screen
- Shut off the valve
- Use a hose to spray water to dislodge any debris that may have accumulated

Maintaining a cistern may involve different steps. Check with the manufacturer and installer for maintenance directions for your system

Should I be concerned about winter?

As winter approaches, empty your barrel. Remove your shutoff valve and filter screen. Your barrel has little risk of cracking, but the valve is more susceptible to damage from freezing water. For larger tanks, check manufacturer's instructions.

Debunking the Myths

Will my rain barrel attract mosquitoes?

Your barrel is designed to keep pests out! If you want to be more proactive, there are safe, simple and effective ways to keep your rain barrel mosquito free.

Can I use my rain barrel to water veggies?

This should be done at your discretion. While plants may prefer rainwater over chemically treated tap water, rooftops gather airborne particulates and have the potential to leech contaminants from shingles.

Water Audit Program



Enhance Your Impact

This guide is one of seven provided by Blue Water Baltimore. Each features a method or technique which is commonly used to manage stormwater, also known as a best management practice (BMP). You can enhance your home by adding additional BMPs to your property:

- Conservation Landscaping
- Hardscape Removal
- Downspout Disconnection
- Rain Gardens
- Green Roofs
- Tree Planting

A combination of BMPs will increase your positive impact!

Financial Incentives

Rebates up to \$.50 per gallon of tank capacity

Check www.bluewaterbaltimore.org for updated rates

Qualifications

- Minimum cistern size of 300 gallons
- Minimum rooftop drainage of 300 square feet
- Maximum incentive is for 2 gallons per 1 square foot of roof area draining to tank
- Re-use or release plan for water between storms
- Above ground tanks are installed on a concrete pad or other surface that will not allow the tank to sink or tip
- Formal Blue Water Baltimore approval

Purchasing & Designing a Rainwater Harvesting System

You can purchase a rain barrel or cistern from Blue Water Baltimore or an alternative supplier. If you purchase a cistern, you may want to consider hiring an experienced contractor. A contractor will ensure that the cistern functions properly and is on a secure base that will withstand the weight of a full tank.

Instructions for sizing your own system are available in the Texas and Virginia Rainwater Harvesting Manuals, links available at www.bluewaterbaltimore.org.

Your property directly impacts our waterways. Blue Water Baltimore wants to help you make your home better!

Register for a Water Audit!

Complete the online form at www.bluewaterbaltimore.org

410.254.1577 ext 106

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