

Rain Barrels



Are you ready for cooler temperatures yet? July was a hot month and the same is expected for the month of August according to the National Weather Service. Drought conditions are also going to continue throughout the month of August according to prediction maps provided by the National Weather Service. Last month I did an interview for Channel 24 News about the difference between rain water and tap water as it pertains to plants. I was also asked about rain barrels. Rain barrels are great ideas especially since we are not getting sufficient rainfall.

Rain barrels are not a new concept in fact people have been using rain barrels, or cisterns, for thousands of years to capture and store free water from the sky. Rain barrels are also a good way to save money. In recent years they have been in popular demand as drought conditions have persisted and local utility companies have raised water rates.

A one-inch rain event can generate up to 623 gallons of water on a 1,000 square foot roof which is enough to fill over ten 55 gallon rain barrels. Let's say that you have one rain barrel that holds 55 gallons of water. One quarter of a 1000 square foot roof would generate about 70 gallons of rain runoff each time it rained ½ inch.

Here are some benefits of using rain barrels:

- Provides soft water for watering plants, washing cars and filling birdbaths or fish ponds
- Alleviates demand on municipal treatments systems
- Reduces polluted runoff
- Lowers water bills and in some cases stormwater charges
- Reduces flooding
- Recharges groundwater

It is estimated that 30 to 40 percent of a home's summer water bill goes toward outdoor use. A rain barrel could be a good solution. Remember that water collected in rain barrels is not drinkable, but it's perfect for lawns and gardens and for use in ponds and birdbaths. Rainwater is naturally soft and free of minerals, chlorine, fluoride and other chemicals, so plants love it. It can also be used for washing cars, decks and windows, too.



If you need instructions on how to build or install a rain barrel, feel free to contact me (901-752-1207). We have a publication that gives you step-by-step instructions. Be on the lookout for the next Tennessee Yards and Neighborhoods workshop. Chris Masin, Stormwater Engineer for Shelby County, talks in depth about rain barrels and their benefits. If this drought continues, perhaps I should think about getting one! Until next time, happy gardening!



Christopher Campbell