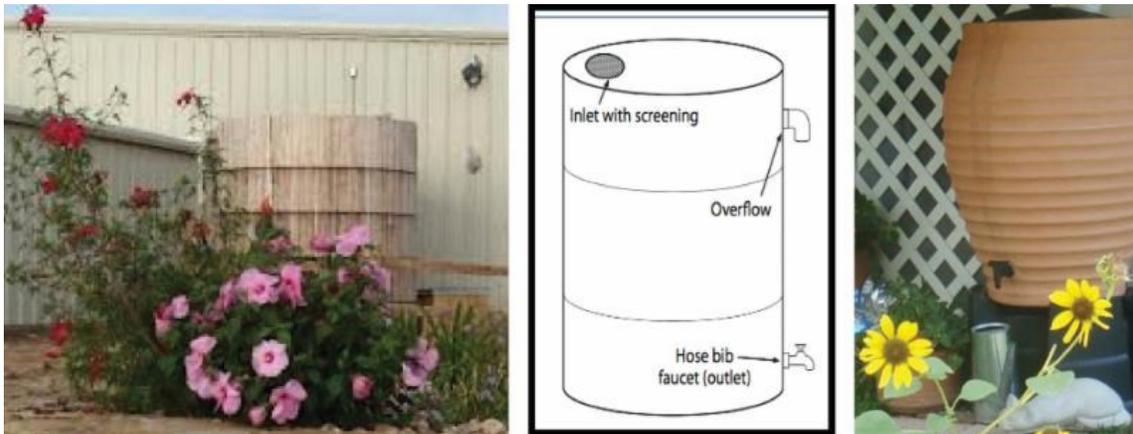


10 STEPS TO RAIN BARREL SUCCESS

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Rain barrels don't have to be unsightly, as these examples from Texas A&M AgriLife, left, and gardener Mel Basham, right, demonstrate. The one at left waters a bog garden and is covered with wooden slats.

Diverting rainwater from your roof into a rain barrel is a smart idea, and it's one that is getting a lot of traction. Rain barrels are readily available but there are some important steps to take to ensure your rain barrel works as effectively as possible.

- 1. Elevation is essential:** Raise your barrel at least 12" off the ground using sturdy supporting materials such as concrete blocks or a heavy-duty wooden stand to create an acceptable flow of water. Stability is essential - supporting material should extend several inches beyond the lip of the barrel.
- 2. Screen savers:** To prevent debris, insects and critters from entering the rain barrel, cover all inlets with a fine mesh screen and check periodically, replacing screens as needed.



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3. **Eliminate sunlight:** To help prevent the growth of algae on the inside of the tank, paint light colored plastic rain barrels with a dark color.
4. **Plan for overflow:** When rains are heavy, a 50-gallon barrel will rapidly fill. Ensure that overflow pipes are roughly equal in size to intake pipes and, if necessary, extend the overflow hose to divert excess overflow away from the foundation of your home.
5. **Good quality hardware:** Purchased rain barrels often come equipped with poor quality hardware. Replacing them with good quality fixtures will pay off in the long run.
6. **Careful selection:** A rain barrel with a spigot set up that will allow you to easily attach a hose or fill a watering will give you maximum versatility. Pumps, timers, and low flow emitters can be added to water different zones.
7. **Increase your capacity:** Consider investing in several rain barrels which can either be interconnected or positioned next to various downspouts close to your plantings.
8. **Keep it clean:** Gutters and downspouts should be cleaned twice a year, typically in fall and spring.
9. **Annual cleaning:** To remove sediment build up, drain and clean your rain barrel annually.
10. **Take action:** If the water smells bad, add a chlorine bleach solution of 1 tablespoon/gallon and wait 24 hours to allow the chlorine to dissipate before using the water in your garden. If the problem persists, drain and clean out the barrel.

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