



Your Stormwater Footprint: Size Matters



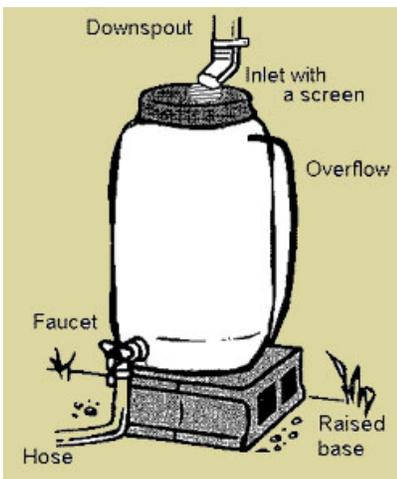
That “Green” Thing

Without a doubt, it’s likely you’ve heard of *green* energy, *green* transportation, and the values of being a *green* consumer. But, *green* water? What is that? Furthermore, what is a green water footprint? For starters it has nothing to do with walking on algae. “Green water” is hinged on the notion of the efficient use of natural resources, in this case rainwater. As a homeowner, one of the most efficient uses of rainwater is its reuse. A lot of rain water we receive is wasted when it runs off of our roofs and into the street. Why not save it instead to use on a dry day? Redirecting your

downspout to a rain barrel will reduce stormwater runoff, and provide a source of water for your lawn and garden.

Rain, Free... to a Good Home

According to Maryland’s Department of Natural Resources, approximately 40% of household water (about 1,300 gallons) used during the summer is for watering lawns and gardens. The water you get from the tap is treated for safe consumption, but plants don’t need their water treated like we do. Instead of using water from your tap this summer, why not tap it from your (rain) barrel? Think of your rain barrel as your own personal rain bank. Take it when you need it, and leave it when you don’t. In addition to storing a reusable resource, a rain barrel is a common sense way to keep rainwater from your downspouts away from your foundation. Rain barrels will also keep your stormwater footprint small by preventing roof runoff from entering stormwater systems. Since the first inch of rain carries the worst pollutants, this directly impacts the water quality of local streams.



The Anatomy of a Rain Barrel

It really is as simple as it looks. It’s a barrel with a large hole in the top (to collect rainwater from your downspout), and a smaller hole near the bottom (to fill watering cans, connect to a hose, etc.). The larger hole on top should be covered with a screen to prevent debris and insects from entering the rain barrel. The smaller hole near the bottom can be fitted with a spigot. A small hole near the top prevents overflow during large rain events, and can be used to connect two or more rain barrels together. When it comes to rain barrels, (unlike the



process of aging) gravity is your friend. For this reason, it is recommended you elevate your rain barrel a foot or two off of the ground. This will help achieve water pressure and allow better drainage of the barrels.



How much rain will my rain barrel hold?

Several light rain events will not cause your rain barrel to overflow. However, a large rainstorm will surely overflow the average 50-60 gallon rain barrel. The volume of water entering your rain barrel depends on a couple of things: the area of your roof and the number of downspouts leaving your roof. Consider a home with a roof area of 1,400ft² and two downspouts. According to calculations by 3 Wet Rivers Demonstration Program (see link below to do specific calculations for your own home), a home with a roof area of 1,400ft² and two downspouts will collect about 30 gallons of rain water *per* downspout, during a 1/4 inch storm.



Whether it's three barrels...



...or a unique barrel,



make it *your* barrel.

For more information, please visit these websites:

Maryland Environmental Design Program: <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/ed/rainbarrel.html>

Rain Barrels: More than a drop in the bucket for conservation
<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/stormwater/docs/rain-barrels-bucket.pdf>

RainScaping.org: <http://www.rainscaping.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/home.showpage/pageID/6/index.htm>

3 Rivers Wet Weather Demonstration Program:
http://www.3riverswetweather.org/f_resources/nmr%20report/App2_barrel_size.pdf