



Roll Out the Rain Barrels

A Water Conservation and Water Quality Project

Two historical events have marked a heightened need for citizens and communities to help protect water as a natural resource:

- In the 1930s, severe drought and dust bowl conditions increased the need for water conservation; and
- In the 1970s, Congress passed the Clean Water Act to enforce water quality standards in the United States.

Today, communities are even more concerned about water conservation and quality because of more variable precipitation, increasing populations, expanding urban areas, and more pollutants in local waterways.

Each of us can make simple changes to conserve and protect water supplies.

Here are examples:

- **Outdoor landscapes** – Plant trees and shrubs to prevent erosion and promote water infiltration into the soil. Use grass swales (low areas in the lawn) or porous walkways to increase infiltration and decrease runoff. Install gravel trenches along driveways and patios to collect water and allow it to filter into the soil.
- **Install rain barrels** to collect runoff for later use. Don't have a rain barrel? Try reusing an old container. Wooden, metal, and plastic barrels, old bathtubs, buckets, trash cans, pots, are a few of the items that have been recycled for this purpose.



Smoky Hill River Kanopolis Lake Watershed

Collecting rain water is budget and environmentally friendly. It may save money on your water bill.

- In the heat of the summer, nearly 40 percent of household water is used for outdoor watering.
- Collecting rainwater and using it slowly on your landscape encourages infiltration, which helps prevent runoff of pollutants — including nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment, and *E.coli* bacteria — into local streams, creeks, and rivers.
- Rainwater may be better for flowers, vegetables, trees, shrubs, and lawns because it is not chlorinated, free of chemicals, naturally soft, oxygen rich, and warmer than water coming from the hose or sprinkler.
- Plants, trees and shrubs may be more vibrant and hearty when irrigated with rainwater.

Rain barrels connect directly to the home's downspout and allow the rainwater or storm water coming off the roof to fill the barrel. If space is available, several rain barrels can be connected, creating a series of barrels allowing for larger amounts of storm water to be collected and stored.

Being a good steward of natural resources makes a difference. Normally, water from a kitchen faucet is considered safe and reliable. But in many areas tap water is surface water that has made a long journey to your home. Before being delivered through pipes to your faucet it has:

- Run down a city street
- Drained into a storm drain
- Emptied into a creek, river, or stream
- Flowed through a water distribution system and
- Been treated at a water plant to meet state and federal drinking water standards.



It takes cooperation to protect local water supplies and ensure a safe, reliable drinking water supply. Building and installing rain barrels in a home landscape is one way to do your part and a step toward being a Clean Water Neighbor.



For more information on water quality protection, contact Stacie Minson, K-State Research and Extension Watershed Specialist, sedgett@ksu.edu, 785-814-7100; James Leiker, Watershed Project Technician, jaleiker@ksu.edu, 785-623-8513; or visit www.MyKansasWatershed.com

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