



*Protecting the river since 1965*

1100 N. Main Street Suite 210  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
(734) 769-5123  
[www.hrwc.org](http://www.hrwc.org)

## Rain Barrel Information Guide

Thank you for using a rain barrel to protect the Huron River. Since the fall of 2007, we've distributed 1200 rain barrels to watershed residents, providing for the potential storage of 72,000 gallons of water each time it rains.

Rain barrels help slow the flow of and prevent storm water runoff from entering the river untreated through the storm drains.

We've learned a few things about using rain barrels since our first distribution. Please consider the following tips on how to use and care for your rain barrel here in Michigan. For more rain barrel information and related links, please visit [www.hrwc.org/rainbarrels/](http://www.hrwc.org/rainbarrels/).

### Support

Rain barrels become extremely heavy when filled with water. If sitting directly on the ground, the weight of the water can cause the barrel to settle into the ground. This can cause a depression in your yard and compromise the stability of the barrel. To prevent settling, **get your barrel off the ground by placing it on cinder blocks or bricks**. Cinder blocks are preferable, since they will allow you greater clearance for fitting a watering can underneath your barrel's spigot. Make gravity your friend! Raising your rain barrel off the ground will also help the flow of water through a garden or soaker hose. Water will flow down the hose and will help drain your barrel over a few days (slow flow method)!

### Use Overflow Spouts Properly

The overflow spouts are the two holes on the side of your rain barrel that lie about three inches from the top. As your rain barrel becomes full, these shunt excess water away from your foundation and into your garden. To use these overflow spouts effectively, **attach a hose (standard garden hose fit) to each overflow spout threading** at the top of the barrel. Hoses should be at least 10 feet long. Place the end of the hose away from your foundation into your vegetable patch, newly seeded lawn, or any other area of your yard or garden that needs water. Please avoid directing overflow water onto the pavement or to the storm drain.

### Store for the Winter

Prevent your barrel from buckling or cracking during our Michigan winters. As the weather starts to become colder you will need to store your rain barrel and reattach your downspout and downspout elbow. Make sure to **empty the rain barrel of all its excess water** through the spigot. It is best to **store the rain barrel indoors** during winter to prevent the plastic from cracking from cold weather contraction. If you are unable to take the rain barrel into your garage or basement, remove it from under the downspout and **turn the barrel upside-down** so water

cannot get in. To direct water away from your foundation during winter months, you will also want to **reattach your downspout and the downspout elbow**. Use those pieces of the downspout you removed to install the rain barrel.

### **Prevent Mosquitoes**

Mosquitoes are kept from entering your rain barrel by the screen covering the entry hole on the lid. There are a few additional precautions you can take to prevent any potential mosquito problems. Mosquitoes hatch in as early as 7 to 10 days and use surface water tension to breed.

**Drain your rain barrel within 7 days**. If you are not able to drain your barrel in 7 days, **stir or shake it** or **add a few tablespoons of dish detergent** to the rain barrel water to reduce surface tension and prevent mosquito larvae.

### **Clear the Spigot and the Screen**

Keep the screen in the top of your barrel free from debris. And in the spring after pollen season clean out your rain barrel to prevent pollen from clogging the spigot.

### **Empty After Rain Storms**

Remember to use and empty the barrel after each rain. That way it's ready to receive runoff from the next shower! That is truly the best way to help the Huron River and save money by reducing your water use.