

RAIN BARREL USE & MAINTENANCE GUIDE

Source: <https://extension.umn.edu/water-wisely-start-your-own-backyard/rain-barrels>

How to safely use rain barrel water to water plants

There is no way to see or smell contamination without getting rain barrel water tested, which would need to be done so frequently that it would be too expensive for most home or community gardens. So, it is best to minimize risk with this water by using it only on non-edible, ornamental plants like flowers, shrubs and indoor plants.

If you can apply rain barrel water in a way that ensures that the water does not touch the edible portion of the plant, you could use it to water tall berry bushes, trellised plants like tomatoes, melons and cucumber, and on fruit trees.

Rain barrel water is a good option for watering your houseplants. Some indoor plants like orchids and plants with long narrow leaves are sensitive to tap water that is softened and contains additives like chloride and fluoride.

How to clean and care for a rain barrel

Fall is a good time to clean your rain barrel. Rain barrels should be stored in a garage or shed, or outside.

- Drain the barrel completely.
- Remove any debris in the barrel.
- Use a long-handled brush to scrub the inside of the barrel with water and detergent. Rinse with clean water.
- Store your rain barrel upside down or covered over the winter. Remove the hose and screen and store them in a garage or shed. Make sure your rain barrel is empty as any water left in the barrel may freeze, expand and crack your rain barrel.

Without a rain barrel in place, you'll want to attach a temporary extension to your downspout to direct any snowmelt or early rains away from your house and sidewalks.