

Conserve Water Using Rain Barrels

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It is important to take care of our precious water reserves whether or not there is a drought this year. Summer outdoor lawn and garden water use is 40% of our domestic water usage. One simple, low-cost method to reduce outdoor water use is to install rain barrels. Rain barrels conserve water and reduce the undesirable impacts of runoff.

Rain barrels are designed to capture and store rainwater coming off a rooftop. The EPA says an American family of four can use 400 gallons of water per day, and about 30 percent of that is devoted to outdoor uses. By collecting water for later use in the lawn and garden, you are helping conserve water and saving money doing it. Rainwater is also salt free and has a high level of purity, which is great for plants.

Rain barrels reduce water pollution by reducing stormwater runoff. They collect water that would normally pour out of gutter downspouts and travel into nearby stormdrains, streams and rivers carrying with it pollutants picked up from lawns, roads, and sidewalks. These pollutants include sediment (soil), oil, salt, bacteria and nutrients (fertilizers). Rain barrels also reduce the peak runoff rates that would otherwise flow swiftly into receiving waters and contribute to flooding and erosion problems.

This year the Delaware Nature Society is offering rain barrels at the Native Plant Sale. The rain barrels are complete and

ready to use. They hold 55 gallons of water and are made from sturdy black plastic.

For more information about conservation in the garden, contact the Delaware Nature Society or visit our website. Through the Backyard Habitat Program you can receive free one-on-one technical assistance and certify your garden, or property, as an official Backyard Wildlife Habitat™ site. Your participation in the program creates valuable wildlife habitat and helps improve Delaware's water quality.

* Upon its opening in September 2009, DNS will operate the DuPont Environmental Education Center at the Russell W. Peterson Urban Wildlife Refuge on the Wilmington Riverfront