

To Make a Rain Barrel from a Plastic Barrel

1. Purchase a $\frac{3}{4}$ " plastic faucet and a tube of silicone sealant from the home improvement center.
2. Drill a $\frac{15}{16}$ " hole about an inch or so up from the bottom of the barrel. For plastic barrels, a regular paddle bit or hole saw will do the job. The hole cannot be any bigger than $\frac{15}{16}$ ".
3. Insert the threaded end of the faucet in the barrel and slowly start turning it into the barrel.
4. When the threads start to "take", add a ring of sealant around the threads on the part of the faucet outside the barrel.
5. Continue turning the faucet until you can tell that it's seated against the barrel. If the barrel will be placed on the ground, turn the faucet to a "sideways" position so that you can attach a short hose to it.
6. Allow the assembly to stand overnight before using.
7. To connect the barrel to a downspout from the guttering system, purchase a down spout connector from the home improvement center. It is rectangular on one end and 4" round on the other end.
8. Draw the size of the round end of the connector on the top of the barrel close to the side.
9. Drill a small hole or two at the edge of the drawn circle.
10. Insert a saber saw into the hole and cut the circle.
11. Insert the connector and place a small bead of silicone sealant around it.
12. If the lid of the barrel is removable, remove it, place a piece of screen wire over the top of the barrel and reinstall the lid fastening ring without the lid.
13. Note that a brass faucet may be used in a plastic barrel, but the hole size will be different and the setup is the same as the one below for the metal barrels.

To Make a Rain Barrel from a Metal Barrel

1. Purchase a $\frac{1}{2}$ " brass faucet, metal 1" flat washer, a rubber hose gasket, a $\frac{7}{8}$ " bi-metal hole saw, one square yard of aluminum wire or nylon mesh (screen wire), and a $\frac{3}{4}$ " conduit nut (electrical department) from the home improvement center.
2. Drill one hole an inch or so above the bottom of the barrel.
3. Install the 1" metal flat washer on the threaded end of the faucet that goes into the barrel.
4. Insert the faucet with the washer into the hole.
5. Install a rubber gasket on the threaded end of the faucet inside the barrel. You'll need some help on this part. Have someone hold the faucet while attaching the gasket and the nut.
6. Install a nut on the threaded end of the faucet.
7. Tighten the nut until the gasket "squeezes" a little inside of the barrel. Sometimes it is easier to turn the faucet rather than the nut. You may turn the faucet "sideways" if the barrel will be setting on the ground.
8. Remove the lid fastening ring and take out the plastic top of the barrel.

9. Install the wire or nylon mesh over the top of the barrel.

10. Install and tighten the lid fastening ring without the lid.

To Connect Two or More Plastic Barrels

1. Drill a 15/16 hole about 2 inches down from the top of both barrels.
2. Insert a male-threaded 3/4" PVC connector in the hole in each barrel. Be sure to add sealant to the final few threads.
3. Place the barrels side by side in the position where they will be permanently mounted or placed.
4. Cut a piece of 3/4" PVC to the length you desire between the two barrels.
5. Insert the pipe into the connector in each

barrel.

Connecting two or more metal barrels is the same process except that you will probably have to use metal pipe—either galvanized or copper and the appropriate fittings.

For a really neat setup, place another pipe between the barrels close to the bottom so that the barrels all drain at the same time. That way, you only need one faucet on one of the barrels.

To Add a Little Gravity to the Barrels

Buy 3 cinder blocks at the home center and arrange them in a triangle on the ground. Set each barrel on top of the triangle or square. Attach a short hose to the faucet. To get even more height, build a sturdy stand as high as you need or want it. Note that a full barrel of water weighs over 400 pounds, so the stand has to be sturdy, well-braced and placed on solid footing. One person told us of a neighbor who laid his barrels horizontal on a stand and then connected them together. He had about 10 barrels stacked up so that he had lots of gravity to push the water out the bottom barrel's faucet.

*The source for this **GVST Gardening Guide** is Tom Harris, PhD, of the Gardening Volunteers of South Texas and gardening columnist for the **Boerne Star** weekly newspaper. Demonstration barrels were furnished by Milberger's Landscaping Nursery. (The barrels for the demonstration were purchased from **Dave the Barrel Man, 811 Roosevelt, San Antonio, 210-534-5416**)*

