

# Rain Barrels

Local Government and other authorities have encouraged the use of rain barrels to provide limited, supplemental water for irrigation type purposes.

The Architectural Committee has reviewed the types of barrels suggested and provides the following criteria and information for homeowners wishing to install barrels at their homes:

The rain barrel must not exceed fifty-five gallons in size corresponding with the size available through authorities such as Manatee County.

The rain barrel must be either green in color or painted to match the wall color of the home.

The preferred material to be used is plastic.

The best location to site a rain barrel is directly under a downspout. This will impose limitations on where the barrels can be placed. The preferred location is at a corner of the home, at the rear or side of the property so as not to be visible from the street. The barrel should be located where neither the aesthetics nor the noise will directly impact neighbors or the neighborhood.

The barrels may be elevated no more than two or three feet above ground for ease of use and access for maintenance. The elevation provides a nominal increase in water pressure for use but no meaningful increase. Without the use of a pump the rain barrel will only provide local water uses sufficient to provide hand type water for the immediate area.

Rain barrels may be situated at ground level.

Manatee County and other authorities recommended anchoring the barrel to the wall to prevent tipping. If a homeowner wishes to anchor the barrel to prevent it from falling over one option would be to strap it to the exterior of the home. The strapping and any other associated material would also need to be painted in green or the body color of the home according to the color adopted for the barrel. If a full barrel were to leak, fall over or lose its seal causing the water to wash out the landscape beds or the soil around the home, the owner will be directly responsible for all repairs and/or re-landscaping.

A submission to the Architectural Committee for approval is required for use of a rain barrel.

Applicants should clearly show the proposed location with a sketch and identify the size, material, the color of the barrel proposed for use and the method of anchoring or securing the barrel.

## ASSOCIATED INFORMATION

Information obtained from Manatee County and from SWFWMD:

A primary purpose of a rain barrel is to provide a small and localized supplemental water source for irrigation. However, there will not be enough pressure in a rain barrel to irrigate any significant parcel of land. According to the SWFWMD Homeowners' Guide to rain barrels

([http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/publications/files/rain\\_barrels\\_guide.pdf](http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/publications/files/rain_barrels_guide.pdf)), "To generate any workable pressure without the use of a pump, a tall storage tank or an extremely elevated tank is needed. Installing a pump on a small rain barrel would be impractical, as the flow rate would drain the barrel in minutes".

Mosquitoes are a concern because they are attracted to standing water. The simple way to avoid a mosquito infestation is to place a lid on the rain barrel and affix the drainpipe from the roof tightly into barrel's opening. According to the SWFWMD guide, " If you have a tight fit where the downspout enters the barrel, there should be little problems with mosquitoes getting into the barrel. Small gaps or holes can be filled with caulk". However, if the home has no gutters and downspouts, this method would not apply. In all other cases, the homeowner would have to use other methods to control the mosquitoes. "If keeping mosquitoes out of the tank is impossible, there are products available at home centers or pond supply stores that will prevent mosquitoes from breeding. The most common product is found in tablet form, which contains *Bacillus thuringiensis*, a biological larvicide. Just a small amount in the barrel will last 30 days or longer". However, the homeowner would have to ensure that the product is applied to the barrel, even if the homeowner isn't able to personally attend to it.

Issues have been raised at the stability of rain barrels. Will a rain barrel tip over? Water weighs a little over 8 lbs. per gallon, so a 50-gallon rain barrel will weigh over 400 pounds when full. This can create a potentially hazardous situation. The SWFWMD guide suggests that the owner "strap or attach the barrel to a nearby wall or other stable structure (fence, tree, etc.). Any type of frame can be built around the barrel, or straps can be wrapped around or screwed to the barrel and then anchored to a wall or other stable structure. If an anchored barrel sits on a level and stable platform, tipping over is not a problem".

For additional information homeowners may wish to contact SWFWMD or Manatee County. The following links will assist in obtaining more information:

**[http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/publications/files/rain\\_barrels\\_guide.pdf](http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/publications/files/rain_barrels_guide.pdf)**

**[http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu/lawn\\_and\\_garden/fyn/rain-barrel.shtml](http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/fyn/rain-barrel.shtml)**

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