

THE GREEN GIRL

The Green Girl's bucket list: Repurpose your rain water

By Kristi Martin Moyer

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You'd never know it with our recent multiyear drought, but West Palm Beach is one of the rainiest cities in the U.S. According to some charts, it's the nation's fourth-rainiest city, with an impressive 52 to 53 inches of average rainfall.

Yet, according to the South Florida Water Management District, that's still not nearly enough for our thirsty yards, since irrigation accounts for up to 50 percent of our household water use.



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Here's a thought: why not save that rain water and redistribute it when your plants need it? All you need is a rain barrel, which can be attached to a hose or emptied into a watering can.

The potential savings are mind-boggling.

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An inch of rainfall on a 1,000 square foot roof yields 623 gallons of water. If you managed to save all the water falling on your average, 2,400 square-foot house each year, you'd harvest 75,000 gallons!

You can buy a 55-gallon rain barrel from West Palm Beach-based Biobarrels.com (561 308-8585) for \$80, but making your own is easy and inexpensive. See directions at www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/conservation/rainbarrel.

For the more committed, Rain Drops Cisterns and Water Storage in the Tampa Bay area has modernized the ancient rain barrel. Priced from about \$500 to \$1,400, these tanks will hold 130 to 620 gallons. The water captured can be used for irrigation, swimming pools and ponds, car washing, and can even be connected directly to your plumbing. Yes, you could flush your toilets and even shower with water collected from your roof. (But you can't drink it.)

Now that water restrictions are likely to be a permanent part of our lives, perhaps it's time to learn to

save not for a rainy day, but the rainy day itself.

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Supplemented by staff members of Pine Jog Environmental Education Center, West Palm Beach, in association with Florida Atlantic University. For more information, go to www.pinejog.fau.edu.

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