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Rain

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# Live more sustainably this spring using rainwater around the house

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Reviewed

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As stated by the United Nations (UN), as climate change continues to be a problem, clean water is becoming scarcer, causing more ecological problems. Beyond this, water is expensive, as one look at your water bill can tell you.

We use loads of water every day, so if you're looking to live more sustainably or are looking to lower your expenses, look at the way you use water for starters. While water is something we can't do without, there is a way to use water that has less of an environmental impact and will cost you less, too. The answer comes from above: rainwater. Here are various ways you can use harvested rainwater around your home, state permitting.

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## What to know about rainwater regulations

Before you begin using rainwater, it's important to know the laws in place regarding collecting it. As there are no federal laws that regulate rainwater collection, rainwater regulations vary from state to state. The majority of states have no laws that regulate the collection and use of rainwater. Other states, such as Nevada, limit rainwater to be used only for non-potable purposes (essentially any use that doesn't risk ingestion). Others, such as Utah, may require permits depending on how much water is collected. Yet, it's not all gloom

and doom—there are many states that offer incentives for collecting rainwater, such as rebates on collection systems. Before you commit to repurposing your rainwater, check for any regulations in your state.

## How to collect rain

### Rain barrel

First comes first. You need a way to catch and store rainwater. That's where rain barrels come in handy. While you could install a more sophisticated rain harvesting system in your home, rain barrels are inexpensive and easy to install. Simply put, these barrels capture rainwater that runs off your roof from your gutters. They often come with spigots for easy access to the water and are equipped with mesh for basic filtration. Potable water requires more a robust filtration process than that in a rain barrel, so we'll be primarily focusing on non-potable water uses.

One of the best rain barrels on Amazon is the RTS Home Accents Polyethylene 50 Gallon Flat Back Eco Rain Barrel, which has over 1,600 five-star reviews. Reviewers love it for its sturdiness, price and excellent customer support from the company that manufactures it.

**\$154 from Amazon**

### Gutter guards

Since rainwater makes its way through your gutters, you'll need to make sure they're clear of any debris. This will make your rainwater collecting more efficient, as less water will be absorbed by dirt and plant matter in your gutters, and purer, as you'll have less particulates in your water.

The easiest way to ensure your gutter is sufficiently clean is by installing a gutter guard. The best one we've tested is the FlexxPoint 30 Year Gutter Cover System, which we love because of its durability, simple installation and excellent debris blockage.

**\$249 from Amazon**

► **More:** Be more water-conscious at home with these easy steps

# Ways to reuse rainwater at home

## Gardening and lawncare

Your plants and lawn both love (and need) copious amounts of water, so why not use your rainwater to water all your greenery? One way to use your water this way is to create a rain garden wherein you direct your runoff directly to a depression in your yard. If you're using a barrel to collect your rainwater, you may decide to connect a hose to the nozzle in order to water your lawn and plants directly. Of the garden hoses we tested, we found the Flexzilla Garden Hose to be the best thanks to its light weight, flexibility and comfortable grips.

**\$40 from Amazon**

## Flushing your toilet

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), on average, toilets account for 30% of a home's water usage, with anywhere from 1.6 to 7 gallons being used per flush depending on the age of the toilet. Whether you're looking to use rainwater to help the environment or to help your wallet, one of the most impactful uses of it will be with your porcelain throne. In case you didn't know, you can manually trigger a toilet to flush by pouring water—a couple of gallons—directly into the bowl. This is because the water you pour will force everything in the bowl down the toilet's siphon, draining it the same way pulling the lever would.

## Car washing

Another way to make use of rainwater is by making your car shine. To wash your car with rain, you can either use a hose connected to a rain barrel, fill a bucket using the barrel's spigot or handwash your car while it's actively raining.

## Filling an aquarium

Fish present another use for rainwater as you can use it to fill your fish tank. However, just as we can get sick from dirty air, so too can fish have trouble in dirty water. Much like how you'd prep your water for use for human consumption, you'll have to properly check and treat your water before using it for your aquatic friend.

If you are looking to get a fish and in need of an aquarium, check out this top-rated tank from Tetra Store. Reviewers love the easy installation, quietness and ease of cleaning. Plus, a filtration system makes prepping the water easier.

**\$34 from Amazon**

## Playing with a water table

Young children love playing with a water toy such as a water table and you can use rainwater instead of using your hose. The Step2 Rain Showers Splash Pond Water Table is the highest-rated water table on Amazon, with over 14,900 five-star ratings. Reviewers love it because of its easy assembly, many accessories and sturdiness. Just make sure your kiddos don't drink the water.

**\$86 from Amazon**

## Cleaning around the house

From cleaning your countertop to mopping your floors, rainwater can be used for various household chores. In combination with the cleaning solutions you'll be using, the rainwater impurities' effects will be negligible. If you're looking for a mop to use with your rainwater, look no further, as the best traditional mop we've tested is the O-Cedar EasyWring Spin Mop & Bucket System. We like that it's washable and find it to be very easy to maneuver.

**\$35 from Amazon**

## Doing laundry

According to the National Parks Service (NPS), the average washing machine uses 41 gallons of water per load, so if you're looking to cut back on your water usage, your washer is a good place to start. With the right detergent, you'll be able to wash your clothes using rainwater, canceling out the impurities the rain may carry. We recommend using the Persil ProClean, which is the best detergent we've tested, as it yielded the best stain removal.

**\$14 from Target**

## Use caution for cooking, drinking or bathing

While it seems like a no-brainer to use rainwater for various needs such as cooking, drinking and bathing, you must proceed with caution. In fact, many suggest that it's best not to consider it at all. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), rainwater cannot be assumed safe to consume (even in a small amount as when bathing), as it may contain various contaminants from your roof and the air. If you're still interested in using rainwater for these purposes, it needs to be thoroughly treated using methods such as filtration, boiling and disinfection to be considered potable.

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