
RAIN BARREL GIVEAWAY PROGRAM

Winterization Guide

Thank you for participating in NYCDEP's Rain Barrel Giveaway Program. We hope you are enjoying your rain barrel! This guide shows how to winterize your rain barrel. In preparation for freezing temperatures, please follow the steps below to protect your rain barrel from cracking **by October 15**.

How to Winterize your Rain Barrel

Step 1 – Drain rain barrel.

Drain the rain barrel by opening the spigot. Remember to use the water for your plants or garden.

Step 2 – Remove tubing from the downspout diverter and the barrel.

Holding the bottom of the downspout diverter, grasp the end of the tubing and gently work the tube back and forth while pulling down until the tubing comes off. Disconnect the tubing on top of the barrel by gently twisting and pulling the tubing.



An Example of a Winterized Diverter

Step 3 – Attach plug to tank outlet.

One of the diverter's tank outlets or "ports" will already have a plug on it; verify this plug is secure and cannot be pushed any further on to the port. Where the tubing was previously attached, push the plug that you received in your diverter kit onto the tank outlet. Gently work the plug back and forth with one hand while holding the diverter in place with the other. Push the plug as far as possible onto the port so that it fits snugly.

Tips for Cleaning

Rain barrels and all attachments should be cleaned every year. Here's how to do it:

- **Tubing:** Tubing can be cleaned by soaking it in warm, soapy water, then working a strip of rag through the tubing.
- **Barrel:** Remove one or both bung caps (the two seals on the top of your barrel) by unscrewing them with a bung wrench, a pair of pliers, or a wrench. Open the pliers or wrench so that each end is wedged against opposing sides of the "x" shaped indentation, then the twist the pliers or wrench.

Rinse the barrel with a mild soap or cleaner such as 2 tsp of castile soap with 2 tsp of vinegar per gallon of water. Then use a concentrated nozzle sprayer on the garden hose to remove any residue inside the barrel. Be sure to fully drain the barrel after cleaning it.



Top of Barrel Showing Both Bung Caps

Screw the bung caps back in place TIGHTLY. These steps must be completed for the diverter to send excess water down the downspout.

- **Diverter:** Slide the door up, pushing up against the tab at the top of the door. Carefully reach inside and remove leaf debris or twigs from the reservoir. Be sure to avoid the sharp ends of the screws used to hold the diverter together and mount it on the downspout.

To minimize debris in the diverter, clean your gutters regularly.

Tips for Winter Storage

Ideally, over the winter the rain barrel would be stored out of the elements in a garage or a shed. If you wish to leave the rain barrel outdoors, keep in mind the barrel is light when empty and could be blown by a strong wind. Consider placing the barrel under stairs or a deck, or relocate it to a corner where it will be less likely to be blown. The rain barrel can stay in place if you prefer. Keep the spigot open over the winter to allow for any water that enters the barrel to run out. Store the tubing in a garage or shed, preferably near the garden hose to make it easier to find next spring!

Information about Algae Growth

Algae growth in rain barrels is a result of three factors:

Organic debris – Although your diverter separates out leaves, sticks, and seeds, the stored rainwater will pick up some organic matter as it washes over your roof and through the gutters on your home. This organic matter nourishes the algae. Removing the organics will help stop algae growth. Keeping your gutters clean is the key—you can clean them yourself, have a service do it, or install a gutter guard to keep debris out of the gutters.

Time – The longer your barrel sits with water in it, the more algae has a chance to grow. If rain is in the forecast, consider emptying your barrel to make room for fresh water. Drain the water onto an area that can absorb it—not pavement or hard-packed ground. If you have a tree near your home, give it a thorough soaking—most urban trees do not get enough water due to pavement on top of the root system.

Sunlight – Direct sun on your barrel will give algae the energy it needs to grow. Shading the barrel is a great way to inhibit algae growth. You can do this easily by putting up a screen around the barrel (such as garden lattice or fence pickets) or circling the barrel and growing a climbing plant over it, such as morning glory. You can also paint the barrel with an opaque paint formulated for plastics.

To limit algae growth, take these steps:

1. Limit the amount of debris in your gutters;
2. Regularly use collected water to make room for fresh water; and
3. Shade your barrel.

Contact

NYCDEP Rain Barrel Program Hotline

866-372-8842

rainbarrel@dep.nyc.gov

RainReserve Product Support (white barrel)

608.316.6844

ProductSupport@rainreserve.com

WaterSaver Product Support (green barrel)

604.274.6630

dan@gardenwatersaver.com

