



Rain Barrels to Go Green

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When a heavy rain pours from a roof, hits saturated soil, and exits the yard carrying topsoil and garden chemicals with it, a rain barrel can be a green solution.

By connecting a rain barrel to a gutter and adding a hose, a gardener may use the water for a slow soak. This slow soak, versus the fast watershed, keeps topsoil and garden chemicals from reaching our local fish and streams.

University Extension held its first class to build rain barrels, and included the supplies. Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists, with Connie Schmiedeskamp, the Naturalist at Bray Conservation Area, hosted the class, using recycled food-grade barrels. The recycled barrels smelled of vinegar or vanilla.

Students added gutter and hose connections, and considered paint techniques to beautify the barrels. Some made multiple barrels for large roof areas, to use at separate corners or to piggyback at one corner of the roof.

The class instructors were Pam Venable and Katrina Thomas, from AmeriCorps in Jefferson City. Venable explained that AmeriCorps is similar to Peace Corps, but AmeriCorps volunteers work in the domestic United States. AmeriCorps' goals have three parts, "literacy for young and grade-school children; economic development; and environmental support."

Venable and Thomas support the environmental portion of AmeriCorps, with knowledge in storm water drainage, and as program assistants for Missouri Stream Team. Missouri Stream Team currently celebrates its twentieth year.

Susan Wrasmann, the class coordinator, explained her home use of rain barrels. Wrasmann "collects rain water for new plants and for hydroponic gardening," and reasons that the rain water is "natural and the right pH balance, without the chlorination." Wrasmann also uses rainwater on roses, and explains that it provides less stress to the plant leaves.

Judy Thorpe, another Master Gardener and Master Naturalist, was delighted with the rain barrel class. "It was very well organized and the AmeriCorps volunteers provided a great learning process," explains Thorpe. Anne Premont was delighted that recycled products were used, and happy to have made a rain barrel so easily.

For the “Constructing Rain Barrels” or “Healthy Yards / Clear Streams” classes, or for the “Master Gardener Course” at the Pulaski County Courthouse, phone University Extension at 774-6177. Give suggestions for additional class topics. Visit the website to learn more about University Extension opportunities, site: extension.missouri.edu/pulaski. Master Gardeners are part of University Extension, and **extend** the knowledge of the Plant Science Division.



AmeriCorps' Katrina Thomas and Pam Venable show drilling the intake area.