

Save water from a rainy day: Free rain sensors and instructions on how to construct a rain barrel.

How would you like to save hundreds of gallons of water, learn something new and have a good time in the process? Well if this is something that interests you, why not attend our workshop on June 19, 2009 from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. at the Bert J. Harris Agricultural Building Auditorium? The Highlands County Extension Office – Master Gardeners and the Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District will team up to put on a rainy workshop. Attendees to this workshop will learn how to make a rain barrel, learn ways to keep the costs down regarding irrigation, find out how to conserve water around the home, and receive a free rain sensor.

We all know that when it rains, it pours; and with a rain barrel, all that rainwater can be saved. Saving your rain water is important because residential irrigation can account for about 40% of residential water use. By collecting rain water and storing it a rain barrel you'll have water for future use, whether it's for watering the garden or just keeping it handy for emergency situations.

With rain water being one of the most abundant and available natural resources, the collection of it is an efficient way to cut down the cost of water usage in the household and help alleviate the burden of water shortages. Strategic placement of a rain barrel underneath the gutters of your home can provide a barrel full of rain water in a downpour, which in turn can be used in practical ways such as watering your flowers and garden or even washing your car. By saving rain water you will significantly reduce the amount of water you previously used from your garden hose. Also rain water is a more pure and fresh source of water for your plants.

So, we've established that it is good to save rain water with a rain barrel. But how about saving irrigation water because it is raining? Rain sensors are designed to determine if enough rainfall has occurred in order to skip an irrigation cycle. This keeps your system from over watering your lawn. The electrical connection between the sensor and your sprinkler system controller is interrupted when a certain amount of rain triggers the device. The sensor breaks the electrical connection so that electricity cannot flow to either the sprinkler valves or to a pump start.

Rain sensors can benefit you, the homeowner, in many ways. They save you money. Whether you pay for city water or spend electricity running a pump, the money you save over time will more than pay for the rain sensor. They also extend sprinkler system life span. Irrigation systems are made up of moving parts. If the system parts are utilized less frequently (during the rainy season), they last longer. They will also protect water resources. By limiting the over use of your sprinkler system, rain sensors reduce excess water run-off that carries fertilizers and pest control chemicals into our shared water supply.

By attending the workshop, you will receive a free rain sensor for your home. You will need to know if your irrigation system is 24 volt or 110/220 in order to receive the correct sensor for your system. But there's still more to be gained by stopping by. Dee Dee Jacobson will present ways to save money on your irrigation costs by simple steps you can apply at home. Corine Burgess will demonstrate ways you can conserve water around the house both inside and outside.

Ed Ayen, Master Gardener, will show you how to construct your own rain barrel. If barrels are available – you may construct one on site for a \$30.00 fee (to cover materials) and take it home with you. What have you got to lose? The workshop is free and at the very least you will walk away with a free rain sensor, instructions on how to construct a rain barrel, as well as irrigation and water conservation tips. We hope to see you there. Call (863) 402-6545 if you have questions.