



Chicago Conservation Corps Speakers Bureau
Rain Barrel and Rain Garden Presentation
6 "Must Have" Talking Points

THEME: Rain barrels and rain gardens conserve and protect water quality

1. The Great Lakes contain 21% of the world's fresh water supply.
2. During heavy rains, sewers can overflow, and this mix of stormwater and wastewater can be released into local waterways-primarily the Chicago River, without being treated. This sewer overload can also cause basement flooding, which can be a health risk (raw sewage/mold).
3. Rain barrels, rain gardens, trees and permeable pavement are great tools for stormwater management and for gardeners.
4. Rain barrels will not necessarily attract insects if managed properly. Here are some management tips:
 - Ensure the screen is without holes
 - Add a small amount of mineral oil to the water
 - Use the water for washing your bike, cleaning your garden tools or watering your trees or houseplants.
 - Rain water is softer than treated water from the tap making it better for plants.
5. Rain barrels will overflow. Here are some easy overflow management tips:
 - Choose locations surrounded by permeable surfaces like grass and native plants (when possible).
 - Look into down spout diverters or connecting multiple barrels together as overflow solutions.
 - Build a rain garden with native plants. The native plants are as common as purple coneflower and black eyed susan. The deep root system and plant hardiness is ideal for a range of dry-to-wet conditions.
6. Rain barrels are great for gardeners. Plants love rainwater. It is chlorine free and, if the rain fell during a thunderstorm, can contain nitrogen. Rain barrels are low-pressure and great for soaking the roots of your plants.

Tips for Adapting the Presentations Outlines to Table Events

The presentation outlines have been designed for a more formal community presentation. Adapt the activities in the outline so that you can still engage your audience and inspire action. Bring raffle tickets so that one lucky person can go home and put into action all you have taught them about rain barrels.

Drop in the Bucket Activity

This activity can be easily adapted to fit into an event table format. Follow the directions on the **Drop in the Bucket Activity** sheet. Ask folks that stop by your table to play a part in dumping out the increments of water and share with them the percentages outline in the handout.

Rain Barrel Demonstration

- Fill up the rain barrel $\frac{1}{4}$ of the way to ensure there is a sufficient amount of water for the demonstration. When possible, bring a houseplant and water the plant as a part of the demo.
- Identify the key components of the rain barrel: the top screen, the overflow outlet, the on/off switch and the elbow/downspout extender.
- Hold the elbow in place and ask participants to pour the water through the elbow.
- Demonstrate how to access the water in the barrel. Then ask the participant to water the plant with water from the barrel. Talk about benefits of rain water on plants as opposed to treated tap water.
- Talk about the various uses of stormwater mentioned above.