

# South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

## Rain barrel workshop set at Gumbo Limbo Center

JAN ENGOREN

Forum Publishing Group

October 21, 2009

If you've ever heard the children's playground song, "Climb up my rain barrel, slide down my cellar door, and we'll be jolly friends forever more ..." and wondered just what a rain barrel was, now is your chance to find out. What is a rain barrel? What does it do? How can I make or buy one? And how can it help me conserve water, especially in a time of drought, hurricane or other emergency?

Rain barrels collect run-off rainwater from your roof using gutters as a conduit. Rainwater is a free resource and a mineral-free, "soft" water. Once a popular method of collecting water for laundry, gardening and personal washing, this low-tech conservation relic is making a 21st century comeback.

On Saturday, the city of [Boca Raton](#)'s Gumbo Limbo Environmental Center, which celebrates its 25th anniversary next month, will offer a free rain barrel workshop given by RainLife, a small environmental firm run by husband-and-wife team Holly and Jason Andreotta of Lake Worth.

They have delivered workshops to local cities and organizations, including Mounts Botanical Gardens in West Palm Beach, the [Boynton Beach](#) Parks and Recreation Arts Center, the Okeechobee County school system and Pine Jog Elementary School, the first green elementary school in Florida.

"With today's environmental concerns, having a rain barrel is something everyone can do with minimal cost, effort and time," said Holly Andreotta. "Making and installing a rain barrel is the cheapest and easiest way to go green."

Mike Zewe, development officer for the nonprofit branch of Gumbo Limbo, agrees.

"I use a rain barrel to water my herb garden. Water conservation is consistent with our mission. With this workshop and exhibit we provide knowledge for visitors to practice water conservation in their backyards," he said. "Our mission is effective if our constituents leave the center empowered to take action."

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, nearly 40 percent of total household water use during summer months is attributed to lawn and garden watering.

A rain barrel saves homeowners about 1,300 gallons of water during the peak summer months and, according to the Andreottas, in Florida, a 20-minute downpour can fill up a 55-gallon drum.

Water from a rain barrel is not affected by watering restrictions. A barrel can be purchased for \$50 and can easily save as much on a water bill.

In Florida, rainwater does not soak into the ground but runs off into canals and drainage systems

and then to water-treatment facilities. Rain barrels allow aquifers to replenish and, by storing rainwater, help reduce levels of pesticides and fertilizers discharging into local waters.

Andreotta buys used 65-gallon drums from dairy farms, where they are used to store milk. Once the residue is cleaned out and non-potable stickers applied to the drums, they make perfect rain barrels.

A filter keeps mosquitoes and small lizards or frogs away. Faucets or spigots can be added to allow garden or soaker hoses to be attached, enabling your garden to be watered while you are away or on vacation.

On a recent Saturday, Stephanie Plass, of [Wellington](#), was visiting the Gumbo Limbo Park with her husband, Glenn; daughter Samantha, 8; and a friend, Melanie Murphy, of New York City.

"I saw rain barrels in Okeeheelee Park and wanted to make one with my daughter. I'm teaching her to be environmentally conscious," Plass said. "I will bring Samantha to the workshop and this is something we can do together."

Carole Fox, 60, a 20-year resident of [Boca Raton](#), agreed. She said, "As long as my homeowner's association agrees, I would love to use rainwater for gardening. Anything that helps me save on my water bill is a good thing."

The Gumbo Limbo Rain Barrel Workshop is set for 1 p.m. Saturday at the center, 1801 N. Ocean Blvd., [Boca Raton](#). It is free and open to everyone. For more information, visit [www.gumbolimbo.org](http://www.gumbolimbo.org), or call 561-338-1473.

Copyright © 2009, [South Florida Sun-Sentinel](#)