

Even if you're renting, capturing some rainwater can be pretty easy to do. Use inexpensive and secondhand materials to divert water from a downpipe into a rain barrel.

YOU WILL NEED

- A barrel - 200-litre (52 gallon) food-grade 'olive drums' or 1000-litre (265 gallon) IBCs (International Bulk Containers) are great - and often available secondhand.
- A knife or saw to cut holes in your barrel.
- A tap, a metal washer, two rubber washers and a locking nut - for the outflow faucet.
- A second tap, a metal washer, two rubber washers and a locking nut - for the overflow faucet.
- A roll of window screen or mesh.
- Staple gun and pliers

METHOD

Step 1: Find a good location to place your barrel. Next to a downpipe from a roof that has a small catchment (not too much!) is perfect. Build a flat platform with bricks or blocks to raise up your barrel. That'll make it easier to get the water out later.

Step 2: Cut the outlet flow hole in your barrel - the spot where you'll place a tap for using the water. Measure about 7cm (3 inches) up from the bottom of the barrel and drill a hole. Thread a metal washer onto the tap, followed by a rubber one. Insert the tap through the hole you made and thread on another rubber washer inside the barrel. Use pliers to screw the locking nut onto the tap, securing it in place.

Step 3: Cut the overflow hole - where excess water will flow out of the barrel once it fills up during a rainstorm. Repeat step 2, this time at the top of the barrel.

Step 4: Cut the inlet hole in the top of your barrel - where water will flow into the barrel from the roof downspout. Measure your window screen and mesh, and cut so it's just larger than the hole. Cut and then staple gun to the top of your barrel, over the hole.

Step 5: Place your rain barrel next to a downpipe, angled into the screened hole. Now, wait for rain!

Step 5: Most importantly - use the water. Make the most of that valuable resource by using it in your garden, on the regular.

CREATE A SIMPLE RAIN BARREL



ACTION 1 | PICKLE YOUR VEGGIES

STORE THE SEASON

Getting your pickle on by storing the season occasionally - a few times a year, maybe - is a delicious way to 'catch and store energy' (permaculture principle #2).

When you preserve seasonal veggies by pickling or fermenting, you're making the most of produce when it's abundant - in the knowledge that you'll need it later, when there's less to eat. It's like capturing sunshine in a jar!

The act of pickling, like gardening, is hopeful. It's a gesture of goodwill to future meals that you plan to have, incorporating a since-past season's bounty. And you don't necessarily need to be growing your own food to get started with pickling. You can just as easily buy produce when it's in season and plentiful in the shops.

Pickling is a great habit to bring into your life for a bunch of reasons. It saves you money, because you can buy or pick seasonal veg when it's cheap and make batches of your favourite pickles for later. It reduces waste, because you can preserve your bounty in reusable containers and don't have to buy, use and throw away yet another packet every time you cook a meal.

It's a great opportunity to explore food cultures from around the world, too. Once essential to survival (having food sources available year-round), many fermented foods have become proud signifiers of specific regional flavours and cultural food traditions. There's a whole world of tangy, delicious ferments out there, just waiting for you to discover them.

AN EMPOWERING SKILL

Learning this skill is also highly empowering - for your household, and for your friends. You get to control exactly what is in your pickle - this means no toxic nasties or hidden ingredients and no reliance on multinational corporations to tell you what they put inside each packet. With real ingredients and just a bit of your time, you'll have a cupboard full of good food whenever you need it - to eat and to share. What's not to love?



HOW TO SPROUT SEEDS



ACTION 3 | GROW YOUR OWN SPROUTS

NO GARDEN REQUIRED

Committing to growing even just a bit of your own food is a powerfully positive habit to cultivate. Because every chunk of resilience we can cram into our household and community counts - including knowing how to grow your own food at home, if and when you need it.

If you don't have the time, skills, location or inclination to launch full-steam into a veggie patch just yet, don't be disheartened. Very few people grow all their own food. Our family sources food from others in our community, too, including small-scale producers and local stores.

But one thing you might like to try is growing your own nutritious sprouts - no garden required. A kitchen bench or windowsill will do just fine. And all you need is a jar, a few seeds, and a bit of basic know-how. The results you'll get are fast, cheap and delicious - nutritious fresh food, grown right in your kitchen, where you need it most.

Sprouts are essentially baby plants - vegetables and herb seedlings - that you eat when they're just a few days old. It's a great way to grow your own

leafy greens at home - which is excellent, because leafy greens are just about the most expensive vegetable you can buy, pound per pound. Plus, greens spoil rapidly after being picked. So fresh is definitely best, and they are incredibly quick to grow in small spaces, without needing a heap of sunlight.

BABY LEAFY GREENS

Sprouts are plant seeds that have germinated successfully - they have literally sprouted for you, entirely within a jar. No soil required! You can sprout almost any seed that produces edible adult plants. The result is a crunchy homegrown veggie - essentially at the 'baby leafy greens' stage - that's packed full of nutrients, all grown in a space little bigger than the size of your hand.

You can do this, year-round in your kitchen, regardless of where you live or what's happening outside.

YOU WILL NEED

- A jar (500ml/16oz or whatever you have), sterilised with water.
- Netting or tulle fabric - or even an old handkerchief will do
- Rubber band or hairband
- A small bowl
- Sprouting seeds - organic if possible. 2 tablespoons of small seeds: eg. broccoli, kale, mustard, alfalfa OR ½ cup of big seeds: eg. mung beans, peas, sunflowers

METHOD

STEP 1

Add the seeds to the jar and fill with cool, clean water.

STEP 2

Cover the jar with netting and secure it with a band.

STEP 3

Let them soak for between 4-8 hours, or overnight. (This ensures you get good germination.)

STEP 4

Drain the water off the seeds then give them a rinse. Next, prop the jar upside-down, at a 45 degree, in a bowl so all the water drains out.

STEP 5

Place the jar, still upside-down in its bowl, on a windowsill or just on the kitchen bench. (Note: too much light can make them bitter.)

STEP 6

Every 12 hours or so (at least once a day), fill the jar up again with cool clean water, then rinse, drain, and put the jar back in your bowl on its tilt.

STEP 7

In 3 or 4 days (or earlier) enjoy your fresh young sprouts! Delicious.

