

# MAINTENANCE

**This guide is designed for individuals who have already purchased a Green Calgary rain barrel and need assistance with maintenance and troubleshooting. It covers common questions related to repairs, fittings, installation, cleaning, and more to help you get the most out of your rain barrel.**

**If you have any additional questions, feel free to email [products@greencalgary.org](mailto:products@greencalgary.org) or call **368-887-8675**.**

## **My barrel is leaking or needs repair, how can I do this?**

- 1** Generally, as long as the damage/leak is around the fittings on the side or tap, it can be repaired. The Barrelman will be doing repairs at multiple sales events – details to be announced soon. If it's outside the regular season (past June 14th), contact The Barrelman directly at [thebarrelman@telus.net](mailto:thebarrelman@telus.net).
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## **I need a plastic barrel fitting or a brass tap. Do you have them?**

- 2** Yes, we do, but they are not for sale on our online store. Contact [products@greencalgary.org](mailto:products@greencalgary.org) to purchase and arrange delivery/pickup. The plastic fittings (overflow connectors and end caps) are \$5+GST each. Taps are \$6.50 +GST.
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## **I have the older style GC rain barrel that is single outlet. Can it be retrofitted so I can join two barrels together?**

- 3** Because these are 'single outlet barrels,' they were designed to be solo barrels to function with a diverter. They can't be connected in a series without structural changes. The Barrelman may be able to modify them for you, which would likely be less expensive than purchasing new rain barrels. Bring them for a repair (see above) to have this assessed and done if possible.
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## **How many rain barrels could fit in my car?**

- 4** 3 can fit in a large SUV, 2 can fit in a smaller SUV, and smaller cars can usually only fit 1 because it is too tall for the trunk, so it has to go in the backseat.
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## **Do we sell a downspout extender?**

- 5** No, try a hardware store. Premeasure your downspout first as there are different sizes.
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### **How do I re-attach my downspout for the winter?**

- 6** You can re-attach the downspout by crimping it and inserting it into the existing downspout. Sometimes the downspout needs to be attached with a screw, but often it can just be wedged in.
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### **What if I can't fit my watering can under the brass tap?**

- 7** If using cinder blocks as a base, turn them vertically to get more height. You could also attach a short piece of hose and use that to fill the watering can/jug.
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### **What if I'm having trouble screwing my brass tap onto my barrel?**

- 8** The brass tap needs to be screwed on carefully while the barrel is lying down to avoid stripping. Take it slow and don't force it in, or it could leak. Don't use any plumbing or Teflon tape as it makes it harder to get the tap in and messes with the seal.
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### **Do you have instructions or plans for building a rain barrel stand?**

- 9** Unfortunately, we don't have instructions for how to build them currently. We're working on this for the future!
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### **Do your rain barrels have a removable lid so that the inside can be cleaned?**

- 10** For cleaning, there is a bung/plug on the top of the barrel that you can remove to rinse out the interior. We recommend using a power washer or taking it to a wand car wash if there's a lot of sediment or algae build-up. The City of Calgary also has some seasonal maintenance tips: [Calgary Rain Barrel Tips](#).
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## How can I keep the barrel from growing algae?

- 11 You can purchase barley straw to leave in the bottom of the barrel when it is clean to prevent algae growth. This is available from garden centers like Golden Acre Home + Garden: [Barley Straw Bales](#). You can also try suspending a small bag full of aquarium charcoal from the bung to the bottom of the barrel.
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## I have multiple barrels I'd like to connect. Is one hose kit enough?

- 12 1 hose kit is usually enough to connect 2-4 barrels, depending on how close they are together and how long an overflow you need (20 feet is 240 inches). The adapters in the hose kit work for our barrels, and when rain barrels are purchased, we will give you 1 open-ended adaptor/fitting and 1 closed-end plug/fitting for each barrel.
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## My rain barrel has developed a sulfur-like smell. How do I clean it? Is the water still safe to use on my garden?

- 13 Clean the barrel as above by removing the bung and pressure washing it or taking it to a wand car wash. If the smell persists, try suspending a small bag full of aquarium charcoal from the bung to the bottom. Until then, avoid getting the water directly on your plants, but watering the soil is fine as it acts as a natural filter.
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## Can I recycle my rain barrels?

- 14 If the rain barrel is damaged beyond repair, there are two recycling options. Call ahead to organize your drop-off. Recycling comes with a small fee (~\$10-\$15).
- **Great Western Containers:** 7905 46th Street SE | 403-705-0754
  - **Friendly Earth:** 4250 Ogden Road SE | 403-243-1151
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## Where can I get more metal clamps to attach the hose to the barrel?

- 15 Any hardware store will carry them.

## **The water isn't coming out of the tap. What should I do?**

- 16** Open it all the way and check for a clog. Since the water flows by gravity, it does not come out as fast as from a house hose.
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## **Can I use barrels that contained antifreeze as rain barrels? Do you sell the parts needed to convert/modify them?**

- 17** We wouldn't recommend using barrels that contained antifreeze (or any other chemical) for rain barrels due to potential contamination. Our rain barrels are made from upcycled high-quality, food-grade plastic. We don't have expertise on modifying existing barrels, but you could research online or consult a plumber. Our rain barrel repairer, Dirk, may also provide guidance: [thebarrelman@telus.net](mailto:thebarrelman@telus.net).
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## **Do you sell diverter kits?**

- 18** We do not currently sell diverter kits, although we might look at ordering some this year. Our barrels do not require diverter kits. If you have an older barrel that requires a diverter kit, you can sometimes purchase versions from Lee Valley or Garden Retreat.
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## **How tall is the rain barrel stand?**

- 19** 18 inches.
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