

April Showers Fill Brightly Painted Rain Barrels

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When it rains, it pours. That's great news, if you have a rain barrel!

Jodi Roberts of Off The Wall Painting offers hand painted rain barrels to give your landscaping a custom look. Roberts, an artist and Severna Park resident, has been painting both residential and commercial murals for the past seven years. The first request for a painted rain barrel came in 2009. That barrel was auctioned off as part of a fundraiser for the Y of Central Maryland. The barrels have caught on as a fundraising idea, with Roberts donating barrels in 2010 to the School of the Incarnation in Gambrills and Bright Beginning Children's Learning Center in Crownsville. Most people don't wait for an auction though, they just contact Jodi for a custom order. "I love painting these, each one is so unique. I can help a client create their own design or they can choose from something I've already done. People are always so pleased with the result."

You may have seen rain barrels in your neighbors' yard or at the local hardware store. Maybe you have considered getting one, or maybe you already have one. The reason these are becoming so popular is that they benefit both you and the environment in so many ways. Rain barrels enable you to store water for use in the drier months ahead thereby reducing utility costs. Harvesting rain water also minimizes erosion and reduces the run-off of contaminated water into The Bay. And the nitrogen-rich rain water has fertilizing properties for your plants. It's an easy way to be more green this season.

While the water collected is not safe for drinking, it can be used to water plants or wash your car. It has been estimated that as much as 300 gallons of water can be collected from even a moderate rain fall – in more than one barrel, of course. So if you're serious about harvesting rain water, you will want to have several barrels, connected to all of your downspouts.

Rain barrels come in all shapes and sizes to fit your style and budget. They are usually made out of plastic, ceramic, or oak and range in size from 25 to 80 gallons. If you're looking for something with lots of curb appeal, a custom painted barrel is a wonderful option. Jodi's rain barrels sell for \$195 - \$250, which is very competitive in the rain barrel market. She uses a 45 gallon plastic barrel which comes with a spigot, four foot hose and a mesh screen to keep bugs and debris out of the barrel. Roberts is also happy to paint a barrel that you already have or you can purchase one on your own. Her artwork will transform your rain barrel so that it's part of the design, rather than detracting from it. What a beautiful way to create a sustainable garden.

effort to go green, or even to save a few dollars on the monthly water bill, then you might want to think about using a rain barrel to collect rainwater for ur harvesting, which means that they are simply receptacles that are placed outside to collect rainwater for use at a later time.