

Rain Barrel Program Gains Momentum

By Erin Frederick, Conservation Program Specialist

The Saucon Creek Watershed Association (SCWA), in conjunction with the Lehigh County Conservation District, frequently hosts rain barrel workshops throughout the Lehigh Valley. Over 100 barrels have been built to date and the number of workshops continues to grow with public interest. Rain barrels are designed to sit underneath a downspout to collect water from a roof each rain event; this water can be saved and used to water plants.

Collecting and storing rain water:

- **Conserves drinking water resources.** On average, nearly 30% of our daily water use is attributed to lawn and garden care. Collecting water from rain events decreases the amount of drinking water used to water plants and after all, clean, fresh water is a limited, precious resource!
- **Decreases water and sewer bills.** Capturing rain water also reduces the amount of water needed from municipal sources and consequently reduces associated bills.
- **Utilizes higher quality water for plants.** Water collected from rain events is better for plants than treated water (which often contains chlorine); however, the rain water should be used with some caution. The water collected from the roof can be laden with leaf litter, bird droppings (potential for bacteria), dust, other airborne materials, and

chemicals from the roof. It is best to use the water on inedible plants such as the lawn or flowers. The water can be used on vegetable plants, but to ensure safety, make sure to water near the base of the plant and avoid the fruit and foliage, especially in leafy greens.

- **Reduces stormwater management issues.** By capturing rain water and later allowing it to infiltrate in a garden, a volume of water that would typically enter storm drain systems is removed. This helps lessen stream bank erosion due to the discharge of stormwater.

The District and the SCWA have conducted several workshops with the Upper and Lower Saucon Township Environmental Advisory Councils (EACs) as well as the Heidelberg Township EAC. A workshop was also held at the Lehigh Valley Green Building Expo in March, 2009. The workshops provide participants with a white, 55 gallon barrel and the necessary parts and instructions to assemble a rain barrel for \$35. SCWA members and District staff provide tools and guide participants through the construction process.

The next workshop is scheduled for Saturday, August 1, 2009 at the Hellertown Borough Hall. Please contact Erin Frederick at 610-391-9583, extension 25, or by e-mail at: efrederick@lehighconservation.org for more information.



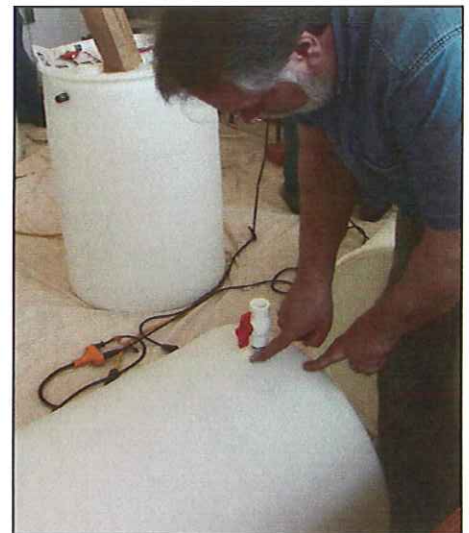
The first workshop was held by the SCWA in February 2007.

Photo by Erin Frederick



Miro Gutzmirtl, Upper Saucon Township, and Erin Frederick

Photo by Keri Maxfield



Thomas Maxfield, Lower Saucon Township

Photo by Keri Maxfield

If you gave me several million years, there would be nothing that did not grow in beauty if it were surrounded by water.

~Jan Erik Vold, What All The World Knows, 1970