

# April showers bring rain barrels



Michael Rea, JCCC's recycling coordinator, is seen here with a rain barrel next to the Hiersteiner Child Development Center.

**Collecting rainwater** was a good idea 2,000 years ago. It still is. JCCC is offering a rain barrel class from 9-11 a.m. Saturday, April 30, in Horticulture Science Center 124. Taught by JCCC's recycling coordinator, Michael Rea, participants will learn how to construct and install a 55-gallon rain barrel with materials donated by Coca-Cola.

According to Rea, creating a rain barrel is more than taking a plastic drum and cutting two holes — one for input from a downspout and one for outflow. Participants will learn how to use the right size pipe and right size overflow spout for the size of their roof and make it site-specific.

"You have to measure the size of a downspout and how much rain comes off the roof," Rea said. "A good rain will fill a 55-gallon barrel in less than 5 minutes, so you have to consider the overflow and how to deal with it. There has to be a safe discharge area because a rain barrel captures only a fraction of the roof's run-off."

A critical point of design is how to modify the existing

downspout to fit the barrel's inflow site. Variables for the outflow pipe are also a consideration. Different size valves can be used. If the barrel's outflow pipe is too small, pressure to a hose is low and frustrating. Rea has found it useful to create a moveable cover for the top of the barrel, allowing him to carry water to a nearby garden.

And that brings up two more elements of planning — determining a firm, level location where the rain barrel can be located and proximity to a garden or compost pile.

Participants can construct the rain barrel in class or take materials home and make calculations before cutting holes. Rain barrel kits typically cost from \$80-\$130 so this class is an economical way to receive materials and instruction for rain barrels at the same time.

"It's fun to discover what it is like to capture water and redistribute it for a good purpose," Rea said.

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