

A Complete List of All the Rain Barrel Water “Facts”

There are 38 different water facts located on over one hundred barrels throughout the two villages.

See if you can find every one!



Stop drinking bottled water: 25% of all bottled water is merely tap water in PET plastic bottles. In 2006, the equivalent of 2 billion half-liter bottles of water were shipped to U.S. ports, creating thousands of tons of global warming and other air pollution. In New York City alone, the transportation of bottled water from western Europe released an estimated 3,800 tons of global warming pollution into the atmosphere. In California, 18 million gallons of bottled water were shipped in from Fiji in 2006, producing about 2,500 tons of global warming pollution.

Stop drinking bottled water: Most of the bottles are imported from far away, but most of them end up close to home -- in a landfill. Most bottled water comes in recyclable PET plastic bottles, but only about 13 percent of the bottles we use get recycled. In 2005, 2 million tons of plastic water bottles ended up clogging landfills instead of getting recycled.

Save 6 gallons of water per week by shutting off the water while brushing your teeth.

40 percent of our household water usage in the summer months goes to lawns and gardens. Use rain barrels and plant a prairie garden.

29,000 gallons of water per year falls on an average roof in the Chicago area (based on 1,350 square foot home). That's a lot of 55 gallon rain barrels.

20 percent of the world's available fresh water supply is found in the Great Lakes.

Showers account for 22% of individual water use in North America. Install a low-flow shower head to reduce your use to 1.5 gallons per minute. You can reduce water usage by 750 gallons per month.

The typical bath uses 40 gallons of water compared to 15 gallons on average for a five minute shower.

When washing dishes by hand, don't let the water run while rinsing. Soap the dishes then rinse all at once.

Run your clothes washer and dishwasher only when they are full. You can save up to 1,000 gallons a month.

Run a dishwasher only when it's full, and don't rinse your dishes before putting them in the dishwasher. The best way to improve your dishwasher's cleaning ability is to make sure the hot water in the sink is very hot before running the machine. Do your pots and pans first, then run the dishwasher.

Dishwashers are more efficient than hand washing. Using a dishwasher uses only half the energy, one-sixth of the water, and less soap than hand-washing an identical set of dirty dishes. Most dishwashers manufactured since 1994 use seven to 10 gallons of water per cycle, while older machines use eight to 15 gallons.

Use the garbage disposal sparingly. Compost vegetable food waste instead and save gallons every time.

Plant new shrubs and trees in the Fall when conditions are cooler and rainfall is more plentiful. The plantings are more likely to survive and you will use less water.

For cold drinks keep a pitcher of water in the refrigerator instead of running the tap. This way, every drop goes down you and not the drain.

Water your lawn and garden in the morning or evening when temperatures are cooler to minimize evaporation.

Spread a layer of organic mulch around plants to retain moisture and save water, time and money. Get free mulch in Oak Park on Scoville at the southwest corner of Ridgeland Commons.

If your shower fills a one-gallon bucket in less than 20 seconds, replace the showerhead with a water-efficient model. Shorten your shower by a minute or two and you'll save up to 150 gallons per month.

Use a gallon jug to collect water for watering your houseplants while waiting for the kitchen tap water to get hot.

Adjust your lawn mower to a higher setting. A taller lawn shades roots and holds soil moisture better than if it is closely clipped.

Use nutrient-rich waste water from fish tanks, rinsed milk bottles, tea pots or coffee pots to water your house plants. Plants appreciate the calcium, nitrogen, etc.

Washing machines use 30 - 35 gallons of water per wash. Wash only when the machine is fully-loaded.

Washing a car at home uses between 100 – 300 gallons of water.

Add food coloring to your toilet tank to determine if you have a leak. Wait about 10 minutes to see if colored water has leaked into the bowl. Then you will know you are definitely wasting water. Change the flapper.

When watering your lawn and garden use a hose with a shut-off nozzle OR use a soaker hose to conserve water. This nozzle will save time and about 10 gallons of water a minute.

Stop using phosphates in your dishwasher detergent. Check the labels carefully. Phosphates are very difficult and energy intensive to remove from waste water. Go to Whole Foods or Trader Joe's or Green Home Experts for your dishwasher detergent.

Stop using antibacterial soap. By doing so you are simply training the bacteria to mutate to develop resistance to the antibiotics that are used in this soap. Soon your topical antibacterial creams like Bacitracin, Polymycin, and Neosporin will not be able to prevent routine skin infections.

Don't throw expired or unwanted prescription drugs into the toilet. These are almost impossible to remove from waste water because prescription drugs are complicated chemicals requiring many chemical reactions to remove. Take old prescriptions to a hazardous waste collection site or deposit in dry landfill.

Don't throw paints or solvents down the sink. These organic chemicals are very difficult to remove from waste water. Wastewater treatment plants do not have the capability to remove these from the treated water that ends up being put into the sanitary canal, which empties eventually into the Gulf of Mexico.

Stop using chemicals on your lawn and garden, especially herbicides and pesticides, since these contain organo-phosphates and other complex chemicals that are very difficult to remove from waste water. The chemical residue from the lawns is washed off by rain into the storm sewers and must be treated by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District.

The Deep Tunnel holds excess rain water during "rain events" in the Chicago area. The project now consists of over 100 miles of tunnels, up to 30 feet in diameter and 150 to 300 feet underground. (Take the YouTube tour by looking up "Deep Tunnel".) The final 7.7 miles of the planned 109 miles are now in the final design stage.

MWRD is Chicago's local wastewater treatment facility, a little known entity, but it is responsible for handling sewage and storm water for 5.3 million residents in Chicago and nearby suburbs. It employs 2,300 people and controls an annual budget of \$1.6 billion. It operates the largest wastewater treatment plant in the world, and typically handles over 1 billion gallons of water per day, and sometimes as much as 2 billion gallons.

Drinking water is increasingly threatened by factory farm pollution. Drinking water, rivers and lakes are at risk from giant, corporate-owned factory farms. Animal feeding operations, many of which confine thousands of animals in facilities, produce huge amounts of animal waste -- 500 million tons per year. Too often, this waste leaks into our rivers and streams, fouling our air, contaminating our drinking water and spreading disease. According to the Environmental

Protection Agency, hog, chicken and cattle waste has polluted 35,000 miles of rivers in 22 states and contaminated groundwater in 17 states.

The five Great Lakes contain about 90 percent of the U.S. water supply. The lakes hold 5,500 cubic miles, or 6 quadrillion gallons, and span more than 94,000 square miles. Only the polar ice caps contain more fresh water.

Most North Americans use between 70 and 100 gallons of water a day.

Lake Michigan, the second largest of the Great Lakes in volume, is the only one entirely within the United States, making it one of the region's most magnificent treasures.

Chicagoans suffered from major epidemics of typhoid fever through 1890. In 1889, the Illinois legislature established the Sanitary District of Chicago. In 1900, the main channel of the Sanitary and Ship Canal opened, reversing the flow of the Chicago River. Water was diverted from Lake Michigan to dilute sewage. In 1911, the North Shore Channel was built to divert more lake water to aid dilution. Interceptor sewers were completed, and Lake Michigan was largely protected from contamination.

Water ecosystems are increasingly threatened by factory farm pollution.

Chicken factory farms alone produce 1.5 billion tons of waste, more than the combined human waste of New York City, San Francisco, Atlanta and Washington, DC. There is currently no legislation that requires special treatment of animal waste, so most of this manure ends up in waterways and becomes concentrated in rivers, choking estuary systems with nitrogen and causing "dead zones" in the Gulf of Mexico and the Chesapeake Bay.