

What is a water butt?

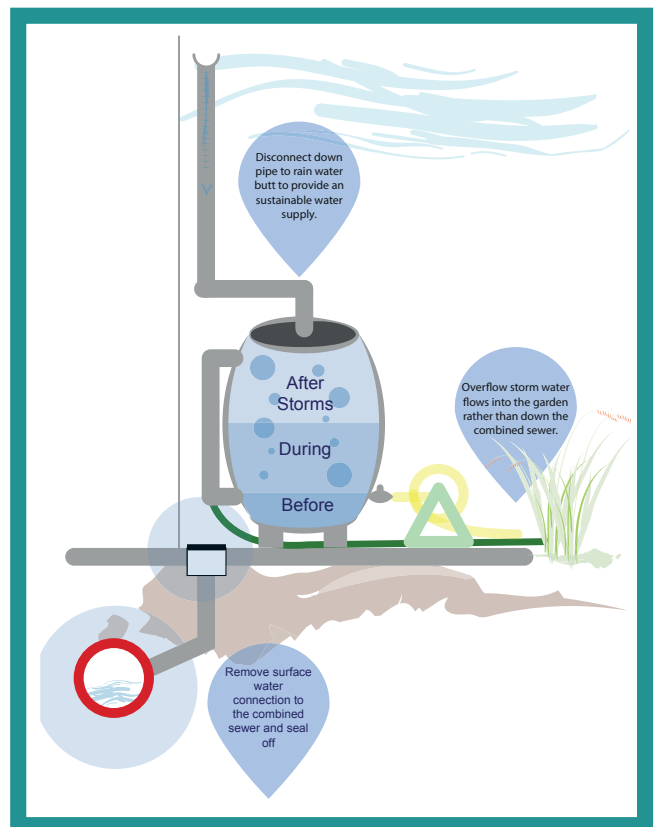
Water butts collect rain water from downpipes and store it for re-use. They come in a wide variety of sizes, shapes, finishes and colours to suit a wide range of applications.

When might I use a water butt?

Water butts are ideal for collecting run-off from roofs by disconnecting the downpipe from the existing sewer outlet and intercepting the flows. An overflow which prevents the water butt from flooding should be redirected away from the combined sewer to ensure flows are fully disconnected. For example, you could connect a perforated hose to the outflow to allow the water butt to empty after a rain fall event, and make capacity for the next storm. (see illustration).

What do I need to consider when planning my water butt?

- The water butt needs to be placed in an area which can take the weight of the water
- You will need an overflow from the water butt which directs water away from the combined sewer
- Where it is not possible to route the overflow away from the combined sewer, you should ensure the water butt has a constant outflow such as an irrigation system so that the water butt does not remain full for long periods
- The larger the available volume within the water butt the more of your roof water it will intercept. An annual summer storm in the South West will typically have 11mm of rainfall. You can multiply that by your roof area to see what proportion of the flow your water butt will retain.
- You may wish to raise the water butt slightly for ease of filling watering cans.



What will I need to do to maintain my downpipe planter?

Maintenance of a water butt will typically involve removing leaf litter to prevent taps or irrigation systems becoming blocked.

Sources of further information

Information on designing, constructing and maintaining water butts can be found at:

- rhs.org – Water: collecting, storing and re-using
- bbc.co.uk – BBC Gardening Guide to Saving Water
- waterwise.org – How to install a water butt
- uksuds.com – Small scale suds for individual buildings