



UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND



COLLEGE OF
AGRICULTURE &
NATURAL RESOURCES



UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND
EXTENSION



UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND
EXTENSION

MASTER
GARDENER 

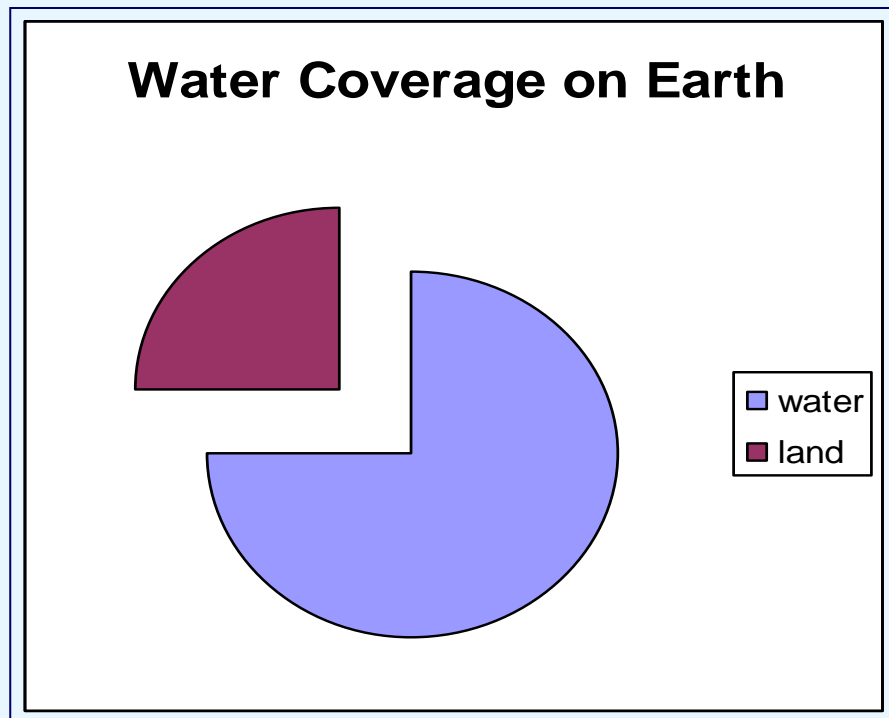
Rain Barrels

Why and How

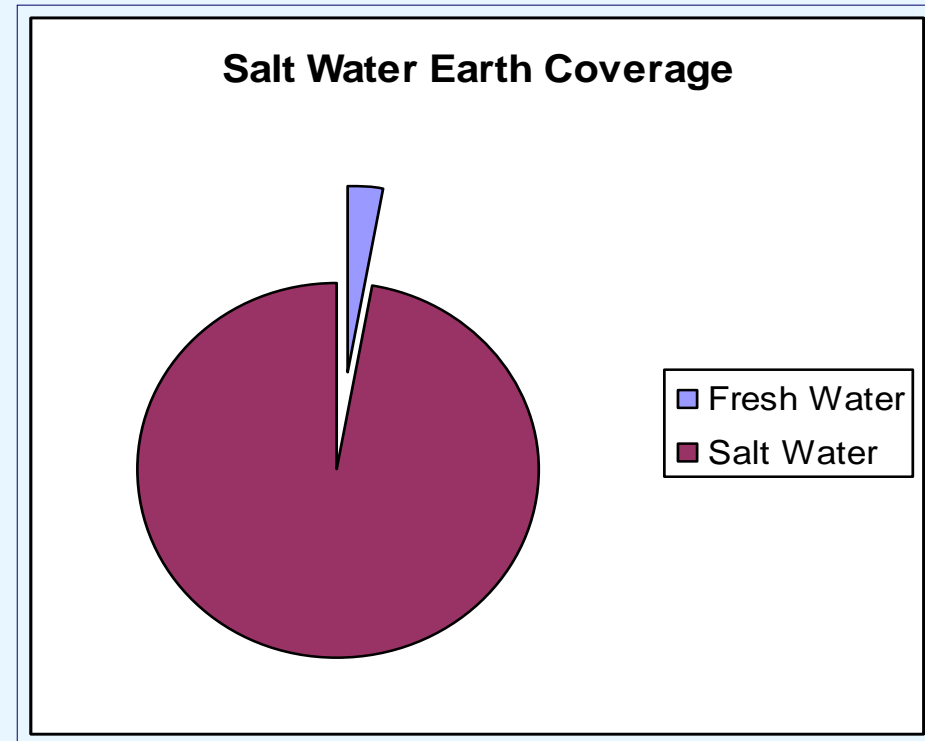


Earth Water Coverage

74% of earth is covered with water

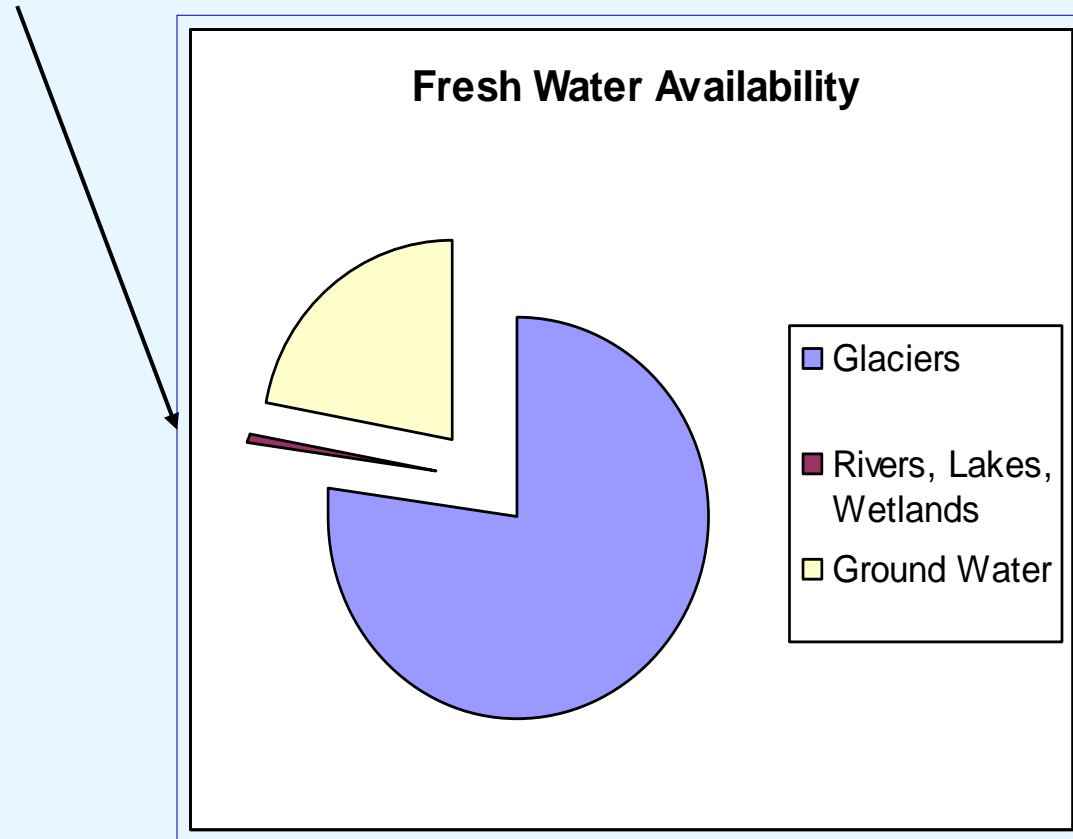


97% of the 74% is saltwater



Fresh Water Availability

- 77% is tied up as ice (glaciers)
- 22% is groundwater
- Less than 1% is found in rivers, lakes, & wetlands



Rain Barrel Basics

Definition

- Any container used to collect and store rainwater for future use



Usage

- We use them to water landscape gardens



Why Use Rain Barrels



Environmental Benefits

- Reduce water pollution by keeping roof runoff from hitting impervious surfaces and running toward storm drains that empty into the Bay
- Prevents erosion (washing soil away)
- Recharge Groundwater (many aquifers are being mined)

Rain barrel water is soft water – free of chlorine, fluorine, and other chemicals used in water purification

Install Rain Barrels Under Downspouts



Use a Downspout Connector



Downspout Diverter

Permits positioning of rain barrels in locations other than directly below downspouts



Build a level platform to raise the barrel



Location

Place rain barrels at the downspout closest to the area that will need water



Linking Multiple Barrels



Features of your barrel



- A basket on top to catch debris
- A fine window screening to keep mosquitoes out
- A short hose with valve to connect garden hose
- A brass spigot on the side to place over a bucket



- Mosquito 'donuts' in barrel to treat mosquito eggs
- An overflow pipe to direct water away from the house foundation

Clean the Barrel

- Empty the rain barrel
- Use $\frac{1}{4}$ cup bleach or 1 cup vinegar in 2 gallons of water
- Rinse well



If you're really feeling creative...



Rain Barrel “Don’ts”



Don't Use Rain Barrel Water:

- To fill swimming pools, fish ponds or bird baths
- To water vegetables
- If your roof has tar, gravel or old asbestos shingles
- If you use moss retardant on your roof
- If your downspouts have lead paint or lead soldering

Winter Maintenance



Prepare Barrels for Winter
Ice inside will cause damage

- Open spigots and hoses so water will not accumulate
 - Store barrel upside down and reattach your downspout
- or
- Take barrel inside and reattach downspout

Precautions When Using A Rain Barrel

- Secure rain barrels so children and animals cannot topple it
- Secure hose on barrel so children do not drink from it
- Ensure that overflow doesn't run into home foundation



Community Covenants

- Columbia residents need to apply for permission to have a barrel
- If you have a homeowner's association, you will need to apply



Blending into the Environment



Where can I buy a rain barrel?

- The county landfill – Alpha Ridge – free to Howard county residents
Marriottsville Road

You will need to purchase parts – available at local hardware stores



UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND
EXTENSION

MASTER
GARDENER 

This program was brought to you by
University of Maryland Extension
Master Gardener Program
Howard County

The University of Maryland Extension programs are open to any person and will not discriminate against anyone because of race, age, sex, color, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, ancestry, national origin, marital status, genetic information, political affiliation, and gender identity or expression.