



A46 Installing a water butt



Water butts are simple and affordable containers that attach to a downpipe to collect rainwater. This becomes a convenient reservoir during dryer spells to water plants to keep them cropping well. It also saves money and the environmental impact of using mains water. Installing a water butt is simple on most sites. This activity illustrates the range of options.

Resources

- Suitable site
- New or secondhand water butt

Activity

- 1 Choose a suitable site for your water butt/s with an available downpipe, eg shed, greenhouse, building, or using special kit, polytunnel (see example suppliers below). Select a site with a firm and level surface as full water butts can be very heavy and tip over.
- 2 Choose your water butt.
 - a Consider materials, eg several are made from recycled plastic.
 - b Space available, eg 100lt is average. Slim line and larger capacity models/tanks are available.
- 3 Choose additional features for your water butt/s.
 - a Child-protection lock on the lid and tap.
 - b Tap at base of water butt for filling watering cans. It helps to raise the height of the water butt on a bought or home made stand. You can also attach a hose to the tap (you'll get some pressure by gravity feed).
 - c Connecting pipes to link two or more water butts together to increase capacity.
 - d Submersible pump for placing in water butt for powering hoses. Consult the school's site manager to check safety details.



Two watering cans eagerly waiting filling by a water butt on stand at Greenfields Community School.

Health & Safety	Be careful when handling water butt and installing connecting pipes, ensuring adult supervision. Follow Manual Handling guidelines (SG1.3) when moving full watering cans. <i>See also Health and Safety Guidelines (Section SG1.2)</i>
Further information	B5.6 Watering plants S4.10 Using watering systems Water butts Direct (example supplier) www.waterbuttsdirect.co.uk LBS Garden Warehouse (example supplier) www.lbsgardenwarehouse.co.uk

Instructions for installing a water butt

- 1 Connect your greenhouse and shed guttering to a water butt with pipe extensions.



- 2 Connect a water butt to your downpipe using the connection kit supplied by manufacturer. This usually involves drilling a small hole on the side of the water butt to connect the inlet hose, and then cutting a small slice from your downpipe to fit the diverter.

Important note: some schools have large or cast iron downpipes not suitable for connecting water butts. Seek advice from manufacturer and school site manager.



- 3 Cover water butts with a well fitting lids. This helps keep water clean and reduces the number of mosquitoes in summer. Also, clean your water butt regularly (at least twice yearly) for good garden hygiene, including gutters and downpipes. Water shouldn't become stagnant or smell if water butt used and cleaned often.



- 4 Use the saved water by dipping a watering can into open water butt or draining from a tap near the base.

