

Useful Reusing

How to turn a plastic barrel into a water butt.

Plastic barrels are often available for free and they make great water butts. But be careful to source barrels that have contained food, or if using old chemical barrels, be very careful to make sure that they haven't had anything toxic in them.



Materials

Marker tape or marker pen to act as guide for removing top.

Tarpaulin

Buckets

Sandpaper

Silicone sealant and gun

NB – tools marked with a * are available to borrow from Nottingham Growing Network

Tools

Saws

Drills

25mm hole saw* and arbor*

70mm hole saw* for down pipe if needed.

Adjustable grips.

Method

Taking off the lid



Empty residue from the barrel into buckets and spread out tarpaulin to catch the bits of plastic, rinsing if necessary. Next drill a hole for the down pipe to fit into the barrel lid – make sure to locate the hole so that your pipe will go in without any angle problems.

Now if you have a barrel without a separate lid, you will need to cut off the top. You need to

decide on your cutting line so that when it is upside down, it will sit nicely on top of the barrel. You'll get an idea of where we made the cut on the photo. We found marker pen worked better than marker tape.

Use sandpaper to de-burr the edges of the cut surfaces, making sure to catch them on the tarpaulin.

Wash out the barrel again before starting to fit the tap.



Fitting the tap

We chose a spot about 10-15 cm from base, as the plastic gets thicker towards the base. Starting the hole can be a bit tricky, but once you have a slight line cut out, it gets a lot easier. Once hole drilled, locate the tap. NB the washer goes on the outside. The taps are screwed in, using adjustable grips.



Tips

Choose a strong stand (eg plastic bottle crate) at least 30cm tall so you have room to get a watering can underneath it, and place it on a flat surface if possible, as otherwise the stand tends to push into the ground so the barrel develops a list.

Don't over tighten the tap. (Spare taps are handy.)

If you want to add a hose, dip the end of the hose (3cms) into hot water to soften.



The finished article!