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Rain Barrels – small steps go a long way...

It is that time of year when we begin to think about spring, and with spring come the rains that we all have been waiting for. This year consider adding a rain barrel to your urban lot to help capture some of that rain water before it goes into your storm sewer down the street. For instance, if you have a 1000 square foot roof and receive a 1 inch rain event, the amount of water coming off your roof is approximately 600 gallons! Think of how much water that is across your community in just a 1 inch rain event? Typically a residential rain barrel can hold around 50-60 gallons of water. Although this does not seem like an incredible amount, with more people having them it can really add up. Take the community of New Ulm for example, there are approximately 4,500 dwelling units in town. If all of the dwellings had a single 50 gallon rain barrel during a 1 inch rain event it would collect 225,000 gallons of rain water that did not go into the storm drain. If only one –third of the residences had a single rain barrel it would collect 75,000 gallons of water. With the water you collect you are able to water the plants around your house and reduce storm water run-off. Whether you choose to buy a rain barrel or make your own, any amount of water that you are keeping from running into the Minnesota River is a positive thing. Sometimes we need to think small to act big.