

# Environmental Tip of the Month June 2024

## No ifs or buts - water butts are what you need!

We will all remember last summer's drought with scorching hot weather, the dreaded hosepipe ban and watching our precious plants wilt and wither in the heat. A water butt will give you a welcome store of free water, while plants and pond dwellers actually prefer rainwater because it has a lower pH range than tap water so it's especially beneficial to acid loving plants.

Things are only set to get worse as climate change bites. Globally, last year was the hottest for 2,000 years according to the UN's climate body.

From an environmental perspective, reducing the amount of drinking water we use in our gardens also helps alleviate the pressure on local rivers, the aquatic creatures that live in them, and the host of birds and animals that depend on them. The last public water supply reservoirs in the South West were built in the 1980s before the private water companies were established. They have since found it more cost effective to take water from the rivers, endangering river dwellers and wildlife, rather than invest in the storage infrastructure necessary in a dangerously changing climate. Your water butt will also save the energy and chemicals needed to purify water making it safe to drink.



### Water Butt Tips

Widely available in DIY stores and on the web, water butts come in all shapes, sizes and prices, or you can make your own from old barrels. It hasn't been entirely unknown for local councils to provide them free of charge or at discounted costs.

You will need to place your butt on a strong, flat surface near a drainpipe so you get maximum runoff from the roof of your house, greenhouse, garage or shed. You'll probably also need a rain diverter kit which connects your butt to your gutter or downpipe. If you are thinking of joining a few butts together to increase storage capacity there are connector kits to do this too. Water butts generally have a tap at the bottom, so to get your watering can underneath you'll need to lift it off the ground – specially made stands are available or just build up your own with a few layers of brick.

Finally, to stop wildlife and debris falling in, and mosquitoes breeding in there, always keep a lid on the butt.

***So this year, when we get another torrential downpour, imagine how good it'll feel to know your water butt is filling up all ready for the hot, dry weather to come!***

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