

# Mosquitoes and Rain Barrels

The threat of mosquito infestation is a real concern for homeowners who use rain barrels as a means of water conservation. Mosquitoes like to lay eggs around standing and stagnant water. Most 55 gallon rain barrels are manufactured with screened lids that deny mosquito's access to the stored water. However, having a mosquito-proof lid on your rain barrel is not the only precaution you should take. Below is a list of additional measures that will protect you against West Nile and other diseases that mosquitoes transmit.

Downspout diverters are devices that allow you to either direct water into your gutter rain barrel or to your normal drain system. If you have a downspout diverter, simply close the gate when the water barrel is full. If you don't own a rain barrel diverter, install an overflow device on your rain water barrel. A PVC pipe or overflow hose can carry water away from your foundation and prevent excess water from pooling around your tank.

**Keep all barrel filters and pre-filters clean** and free of moisture-retaining debris.

**Clean all gutters and downspouts.** Leaves, twigs, seeds, and other organic matter will create a water dam in which mosquito larvae can grow.

**Perform regular inspections** of your system to make sure that there are no cracks or leaks, and that all fittings and seals around the valves are intact.

**Mosquito dunks** are time-release tablets that contain a bacterial agent which kills mosquito larvae, but does not affect people, animals, or plants.

## Don't wait

By taking these precautions, your properly protected **rain barrels** can actually help prevent unwanted mosquito breeding by eliminating the standing water which results from a heavy rainfall. Ready-to-use rain barrels can be purchased at many lawn-and-garden centers. For the do-it-yourselfer, kits used to retrofit recycled water barrels are also available.

