



SPRING | Water Use

Rain, Rain, Don't Go Away! Measuring rain in the garden

Summary:

Depending on where you live your garden might receive much of its water from rain. In hot summer months every drop counts so we're going to count our drops by creating rain gauges. We'll use this information as we decide how much water our garden needs.

Before Visiting the Garden:

Gather: An empty, clear soda pop bottle, a sharpie (+ anything additional for decorating the bottle), scissors, and a ruler.

Explore: Water sources in the garden: examine the hoses, watering cans, etc. Look at Rain by David Hockney

Read: *A Drop Around the World*, by Barbara McKinney

In the Garden:

Rain is an important partner in the garden. It cannot replace our role as chief water engineer but it can help us lighten the watering load. An important job for any gardener is keeping track of how much water the plants are getting. Even after a rain the garden might still need more water to thrive. One of the ways we can tell how much water each storm brings is by using a rain gauge.

Questions to Explore:

- Can you predict how much water the next storm will bring?
- How can we measure the water?
- Examine a plant in the garden, feel the soil around it and look at the leaves. Do you think this plant needs more water? Why?

Activity:

1. Cut the top of the soda bottle off right above where the label is. Invert that piece into the bottle to create a funnel for the rain.
2. Using your ruler measure and mark the bottle in inch increments.
3. Decorate!
4. You may place the bottle in the garden wedged between two rocks or slightly dug into a garden bed for security. Or, take your gauge home and measure the rainfall in your yard.

Gardeners keep good notes and rely on nature to help them in the garden.

5. Over the next few weeks check your rain gauge each day and record the measurement on a piece of graph paper. Can you plot your measurements along an x/y axis with y the amount of rain in inches and x the day of the month?
6. As you make more measurements you may start to see a pattern of rainfall in your area. Make sure to check in on your garden when rainfall is scarce!

Beyond the Garden | Exploring water ways in the neighborhood

There are all sorts of ways to explore water in the neighborhood.

- You can look for storm drains along the street.
- Help our waterways out by cleaning up any trash you find stuck near the drain. Our trees and plants appreciate it.
- If you live near a river, watch how it changes before and after a large storm. Rivers in spring can be especially active as snow melts and the spring rains fill them.
- Is there a local water management plant in your city? Ask if you can schedule a tour and learn how water moves through your city.

Continue Exploring | Supporting Materials

Artists working with rain: <https://therecycledrainproject.wordpress.com/event-opening/>

US Geological Survey's water mission: <http://www.usgs.gov/water/>

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: <http://www.noaa.gov>