

# Roll out the Barrel – for native plant gardens Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest

## 2010 Accomplishments

Following the establishment of native plant gardens, the Chequamegon-Nicolet installed rain barrels at five of these district office gardens. After several years of drought conditions in northern Wisconsin, our native plant gardens were distressed but it didn't make environmental sense to keep watering with city tap water.

Areas around buildings often have poor soil with little organic matter to hold water. It became apparent that we needed to capture rainwater to supplement what nature provided and to reduce the need for tap water for new transplants. In addition, one of the Forest "Green Team's" goals was to conserve water and the team heartily endorsed installing these rain-catchers.

We were able to purchase them through a local hardware store who worked with us to meet our budget. The barrels have a screen top to prevent mosquito breeding and a built-in spigot at the bottom. One office set up three barrels in a series so one spigot draws on all three. They are light weight (when empty!) so are easy to reposition or clean out for winter storage.



Figure s 1 & 2. Fifty-gallon rain barrel set up in garden; Easy to use spigot built in (photos Marjory Brzeskiewicz)



Figure 3. Rain barrel at Chequamegon-Nicolet's Native Plant Garden, Park Falls has a screen top. (Note- that is a "bee house" on the left)

As the gardens become established they won't need as much moisture; one of the benefits of growing native plants. However, the barrels help us save for that non-rainy day! It's also a good place to get nice healthy water for office plants.

Year Awarded: Initial award in 2009

Project completion: 2010

Report number: 1

Expenditures: FY09 total funding \$1,500, NFN3

Partners/Contractors/Coop: Washburn Hardware

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