



# Drywells

## **What is a drywell?**

A drywell is an excavated pit or structural chamber filled with gravel or stone that provides temporary storage of stormwater runoff from rooftops. The storage area may be constructed as a stone filled trench. Rooftop runoff is directed to these storage areas and infiltrates into the surrounding soils prior to the next storm event. The pollutant removal capability of drywells is directly proportional to the amount of runoff that is stored and allowed to infiltrate.

Drywells can be used in both residential and commercial sites and are best suited for treating runoff from small drainage areas (500 sq. ft.). Drywells are not appropriate for treating runoff from large impervious areas such as a parking lot. Successful application is dependent upon soil type and groundwater elevation.

Drywells are common on residential lots and can include 3 or more drywells. Since most drywells are buried and grass covered, their location can be easily recognized by a white observation well cap that is located at least 10 feet from the house.

## **Can I remove the drywells on my property?**

No, you cannot remove these facilities if they have been required by the County. Harford County maintains a database for all required structures including drywells.

## **Preventative Maintenance**

Performing preventative maintenance regularly will prevent long term damage and reduce costs. It is recommended removing leaves and debris from roof gutters. Keeping your gutters and downspouts in good condition will help too. Always keep your observation cap on tight.

Contact a contractor if any problems are noted and have the repairs made immediately.

## **Basic Maintenance ...**

- ✓ Inspect the rain gutters after every storm to make sure there are no obstructions allowing the rain water to reach the drywell.
- ✓ Caps on the observation well are fastened.
- ✓ Remove any leaf and tree debris from roof gutters.
- ✓ Repair any damage to gutters / downspouts from winter snow or ice.
- ✓ Inform contractors of the drywell / observation cap to prevent accidental damage.
- ✓ Install gutter guards or screens on the downspouts to filter out debris and sediment before entering the drywell.
- ✓ Clean screen on overflow.

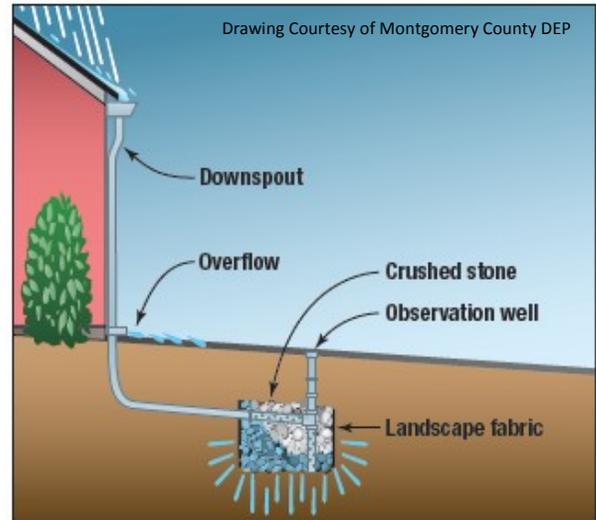
## **As a reminder...**

- ✗ Do not remove the drywell.
- ✗ Do not reconfigure the downspouts to divert the water to another location.
- ✗ Do not place any structures on top of a drywell.
- ✗ Do not remove the observation well cap.



**How often does Harford County perform maintenance inspections and how will I know if my drywells are functioning?**

Harford County is required to perform an inspection every 3 years. If maintenance issues are found in need of repair, an inspection report will detail those items to be addressed within 30 days from the date of the notice.



**Who is responsible for the maintenance?**  
As the property owner, you are responsible for all maintenance of your drywell.

**Recommended Schedule For Typical Maintenance**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Leaf & debris removal				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Check gutters for ice damage	✓	✓	✓								✓	✓
Maintain pipes & gutters	~~ AS NEEDED ~~											

<b><u>Troubleshooting</u></b>		
<b><u>Symptom</u></b>	<b><u>Possible Cause</u></b>	<b><u>Solution</u></b>
Standing water around the dry well	If standing water occurs for more than 48 hours, the dry well or underground piping may be clogged.	The gravel or underground piping may need to be cleaned or replaced.
Rain is immediately flowing into the overflow downspout at the beginning of a storm.	The underground pipe or buried gravel may be clogged with sediment or leaf debris.	Remove any visible blockages in the downspout and overflow. Add stones at the overflow downspout to prevent erosion.

**Harford County can answer your questions and provide additional guidance on how to maintain your drywell.**

Email: [cjoyce@harfordcountymd.gov](mailto:cjoyce@harfordcountymd.gov) \* Telephone: 410.638.3563  
 Website: [www.harfordcountymd.gov/dpw/engineering/WaterResources/](http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/dpw/engineering/WaterResources/)