Just add water

Bringing a Zen-like aura to your home and garden with the trickle-down aesthetics of the rain chain

By Tanja Kern

Annoyed with the sound of rain—water gushing through your home’s downspouts? Consider a rain chain—a beautiful and functional alternative to traditional, closed-gutter downspouts. By replacing your standard downspout with a rain chain, you can create an artistic statement and a Zen-like aura.

Rain chains were first used in Japan as a way to collect and save fresh rainwater in barrels. Today, many homeowners will place a rain chain near a window or landscaped area for a visual and audible experience when it rains. To collect water to reuse in your garden, put the end of your rain chain into a rain barrel.

To install a chain, remove your downspout, and then measure the distance between the bottom of the gutter and the ground to determine how long of a chain you will need. Most ready-made chains come with stakes and gutter clips to attach the chain, and some manufacturers offer installation kits. Read on to learn more about a dozen of our favorites.

1 KENCHIKU
A modern design crafted from marine-grade stainless steel. The cylinder shape is a patented design that provides a very strong link connection and keeps the cups very straight, while still retaining length adjustability. $299. Rainchains.com

2 FANCY KOI
An intricately designed, handcrafted piece of art, the Koi Fish rain chain incorporates the famous Japanese icon and transforms it into a functional rain chain. Each cup is over nine inches long. $340. Rainchains.com

3 CASCADING LEAVES
Etched into a cascading leaves design, this 8.5-foot chain is designed to collect water in a cup at the top and cascade it musically down the leaves. $106. Overstock.com

4 HARMONY
Simple and elegant in design, the harmony rain chain is a sequence of 12 cups and 11 sets of links (each with three ring connections) that efficiently transport rainwater from your gutter to ground. $95. Rainchainsworld.com

5 KIOSHI
Inspired by traditional Japanese design, the Kioshi copper rain chain is characterized by a long sequence of copper links between five cups. The copper patinas over time. $130. Rainchainsworld.com

6 HANDCRAFTED COPPER
Craftsman Ken Au, based outside of Vancouver, crafts these metal rain chains from 1.5-inch-diameter reclaimed weathered solid copper pipe, which patinas gracefully over time. Can be crafted to any length. $299. Rainchains.com

7 GLIMMERING GLASS
Arizona artist Teri Welsch creates custom glass rain chains to any length and color combination. Each chain takes about a week to make, and Teri consults with each customer while crafting the piece. Starting at $17 per foot. etsy.com/shop/Whntlife-GivesRocks

8 RECYCLED BOTTLES
Made with recycled beer bottles, these handcrafted rain chains are painted with a turquoise and blue spray paint and have a beaded water design. Equipped with zinc metal chain and aluminum jump rings. $75-$90. etsy.com/shop/Storm-DancerDesigns

9 LOTUS
As this 8.5-foot chain captures rainwater, the water trickles over into cup after cup and creates a low, natural water sound. Great for outdoor seating areas. $99. Hayneedle.com

10 TAKÉ
A modern play on the bamboo shape, this refined piece is made nine feet long with 24 steel segments. $657. Gardenista.com

11 SQUARE LINKS
Made of high-quality aluminum and finished in flat-black powder coating, it comes with its own hanging hose, making installation right out of the box a snap. $50. Amazon.com

12 CHAKRA
Discover the color of your life force. This recycled-bottle rain chain is hand cut and painted in chakra colors. $50. etsy.com/shop/wild-childcreationsjj

Photography: courtesy participating manufacturers