

SUFFOLK BARREL PRODUCTS

Essential care and maintenance guide for your Oak Barrel Products



Water Butts & Barrel Water Features Storage

Barrels that are to be used for holding water must never be allowed to dry out. It is advisable that they should always contain at least some water and that if they are emptied then they should be re-filled as soon as possible. By always keeping some water inside it will prevent the barrel or tub from becoming too dry which can result in shrinkage.

Water Butts and water features should be filled with water within 48 hours of delivery

If oak barrel water butts are to be placed on a south facing wall for example ,an attempt should be made to shroud them from excessive heat from the sun

*** Suffolk Barrel Products do not accept any responsibility for products that have been denied water and subsequently have shrunk for whatever reason ***

Explanation of Shrinkage

Barrels and tubs are made from oak, which absorbs water like any other wood. The wooden staves from which the tub is made will therefore always have a moisture content. As water is absorbed in to the wood it swells and conversely as wood dries it shrinks. A barrel consists of oak staves, steel hoops and oak ends. The oak staves remain in place because they are under compression created by driving steel hoops onto the barrel. Barrels which are used for holding water, liquor, beer, etc. rely on the moisture content of the wood to maintain the compression of the staves and thus they remain watertight. In fact it is the process of the staves absorbing water and their swelling which helps to seal a newly made barrel and it is the water from the contents of the barrel that maintains the moisture content of the staves.

If a barrel is emptied and allowed to dry out excessively then the staves will eventually shrink and become slack. If the shrinkage is not too severe then by repeatedly filling the barrel with water the staves will swell again and the barrel will become watertight once more.

It is important therefore that water storage barrels and water gardens should never be allowed to dry out. Although it is not necessary for garden tubs to be watertight it is still not desirable to allow them to become too dry because they may shrink and become loose.