

Do Your Part. Be Septic Smart!

How Your Septic System Works

Septic systems are underground wastewater treatment structures, commonly used in rural areas without centralized sewer systems. They use a combination of nature and proven technology to treat wastewater from household plumbing produced by bathrooms, kitchen drains, and laundry.

A typical septic system consists of a septic tank and a drainfield, or soil absorption field.

The septic tank digests organic matter and separates floatable matter (e.g., oils and grease) and solids from the wastewater. The solids then sink and soil-based systems discharge the liquid floating on top (known as effluent) from the septic tank into a series of perforated pipes buried in a leach field, chambers, or other special units designed to slowly release the effluent into the soil.

Alternative systems use pumps or gravity to help septic tank effluent trickle through sand, organic matter (e.g., peat and sawdust), constructed wetlands, or other media to remove or neutralize pollutants like disease-causing pathogens, nitrogen, phosphorus, and other contaminants. Some alternative systems are designed to evaporate wastewater or disinfect it before it is discharged to the soil.

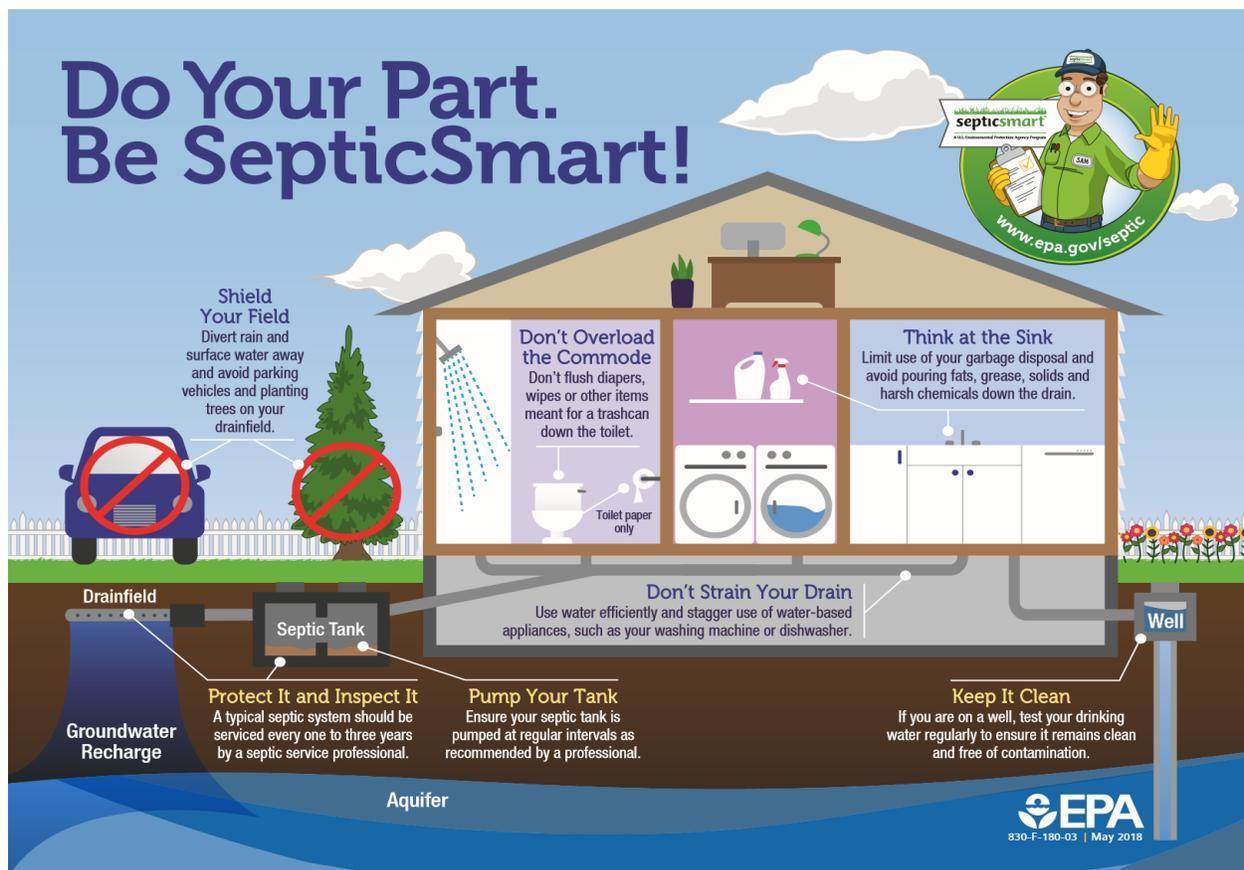


How to Care for Your Septic System

- **Inspect and Pump Frequently**
 - The average household septic system should be inspected at least every three years by a septic service professional. Household septic tanks are typically pumped every three to five years.
- **Use Water Efficiently**
 - The average indoor water use in a typical single-family home is nearly 70 gallons per individual, per day. Just a single leaky or running toilet can waste as much as 200 gallons of water per day.
 - All of the water a household sends down its pipes winds up in its septic system. The more water a household conserves, the less water enters the septic system. Efficient water use improves the operation of a septic system and reduces the risk of failure.
- **Properly Dispose of Waste**
 - Whether you flush it down the toilet, grind it in the garbage disposal, or pour it down the sink, shower, or bath, everything that goes down your drains ends up in your septic system. What goes down the drain affects how well your septic system works.
 - **Toilets aren't trash cans!**

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- Your septic system is not a trash can. An easy rule of thumb: Do not flush anything besides human waste and toilet paper.
- **Maintain Your Drainfield**
 - Your drainfield—a component of your septic system that removes contaminants from the liquid that emerges from your septic tank—is an important part of your septic system. Here are a few things you should do to maintain it:
 - Parking: Never park or drive on your drainfield.
 - Planting: Plant trees the appropriate distance from your drainfield to keep roots from growing into your septic system. A septic service professional can advise you of the proper distance, depending on your septic tank and landscape.
 - Placing: Keep roof drains, sump pumps, and other rainwater drainage systems away from your drainfield area. Excess water slows down or stops the wastewater treatment process.



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