

How to Maintain Your Septic Tank System

The three most important things to remember about your septic system are:

1. Do not overload it. Exceeding the capacity of the septic tank system to treat sewage can cause surface discharges. These discharges can create a health hazard on your property and pollute nearby water sources. Depending on the design of your septic tank system, you may be able to expand its capacity if necessary.
2. Measure sludge and scum depths or routinely pump out the septic tank at least once every year. All septic tanks need pumping to reduce sludge and scum buildup. If you do not pump out your tank periodically, solids may wash out of the tank and into the soil treatment system, limiting its effectiveness.
3. Do not put strong or hazardous chemicals into the system. Septic tank systems are designed to treat normal, household domestic sewage. Substances such as paints, paint thinners, solvents, pesticides and flammable liquids can kill the bacteria which provide the treatment in the septic tank and the drainfield. Furthermore, these chemicals can flow through the soil and contaminate surrounding ground water, making it unsafe to drink.

In addition, following these tips will help keep your septic tank system from becoming a problem:

Keep grease out of the system. It can easily block up the works and inhibit the bacteria that are necessary for proper functioning of the septic tank system.

Toilet paper is fine, but don't put other paper products such as cigarette butts, sanitary napkins, paper towels and disposable incontinence pads or nappy's into the system.

Don't use products advertised as septic system cleaners or starters. They are not needed and can harm the system. The bacteria that are naturally present in human wastes are all that's needed to "start" a system.

If you use a garbage or waste disposal system, be aware that it will require a bigger septic tank, with compartmented walls, and it will require more frequent emptying. It is better to compost kitchen wastes.

Don't drive any vehicles, or establish walkways, over the land drainage or soil treatment system. This can compress the soil in the drainfield, making it less effective.

Don't connect roof drains or surface water drains (drain tiles) to the foul system it can overload the septic tank system with extra water that does not need to be treated and will probably flush out all the solids you have settled in the tank !

Laundry wastewater contains soaps, dirt and grease, and should go into the septic tank not directly into any soil treatment system (and never as a surface discharge).

If your total septic tank system approaches capacity, find ways to conserve water. The most effective ways are to reduce the amount of water used in each toilet flush and install low-flow shower heads.