

TIPS TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

WHAT IS A SEPTIC SYSTEM?

If your home is not part of a city water sewer system, your septic system is crucial because it treats all the wastewater that comes from your house, including the water from the bathrooms, kitchen, and laundry room.

Septic systems typically feature a tank, where wastewater flows for treatment and the solids are separated from liquid waste. Microorganisms break down the organic materials in the wastewater. From there, the wastewater moves into the drain to leach field, which consists of perforated pipes. The wastewater will either evaporate or drain into the soil.

GET FAMILIAR WITH YOUR SEPTIC TANK SYSTEM

Good maintenance starts with understanding how your septic tank works, what type of system it is and where it is located. Because state laws require a permit for septic system installation, your county or town should have a record of the permit and a map of the tank's layout and location. (In the orientation folder, we included the map of the tank's layout and location)

HAVE IT PUMPED ROUTINELY

The average household septic system should be pumped (Have solids removed) every 3 to 5 years.

When you call a septic service provider, they will inspect for leaks and examine the sludge layers in your septic tank. Remember to save ALL maintenance records on work performed on your septic system. They will come in handy should any problems arise, or when you sell your home.

SPREAD YOUR WASHING MACHINE/DISHWASHER USAGE THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

You may think having a designated “laundry day,” when you wash all your clothes and run your dishwasher, will be a time saver. But it puts stress on your septic system. You need to give your septic system time to treat the wastewater, or you could overload the system and flood your drain field. Instead opt to do a full load a couple of days a week.

DON'T TREAT YOUR TOILET LIKE A TRASH CAN

The ONLY thing that should be flushed down the toilet is toilet paper. That means no tissues, diapers, flushable wipes, feminine products, hair, dental floss...nothing.

The toilet paper was made to break down in the septic tank. Any other items are not; they will clog and damage your septic system. Look for toilet paper that is safe for your septic. The lush, expensive brands with lotions and extra plys could clog or add unwanted chemicals into your system.

THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU DUMP DOWN THE KITCHEN SINK DRAIN

Dumping things down the kitchen sink can wreak havoc on a septic system. Never wash things like coffee grounds, eggshells, medication, produce stickers, flour, etc. down the sink drain. ALL can clog pipes or block screens.

Do not discard any type of oil like cooking oil or pain, grease, and fat it will clog your septic system. Dairy products like milk, cream and butter are bad to send down the drain. Dairy is hard to break down in a septic tank because of the lack of oxygen.

Garbage disposal with septic tank, the ground-up food particles add to the layer of solids deposited on the bottom of your tank. Homeowners need to be extra careful that the only materials they put down in the garbage disposal is biodegradable food.

BE CAREFUL WITH CLEANING CHEMICALS

Various cleaning products can harm healthy bacteria in a septic system. Avoid using bleach when washing clothes. If you absolutely must, use a small amount.

Do not use drain cleaners, which aside from killing the healthy bacteria, can damage the tank itself. If a plunger does not clear a clog, try a toilet drain snake, which also works on clogged kitchen and bathroom sinks. Toilet bowl cleaners are also bad for your septic as they typically have bleach. Avoid antibacterial soaps and disinfectants that have quaternary ammonia as well.

Natural or plant-based cleaning products are alternatives to these harsh chemicals.

PROTECT YOUR DRAINFIELD

Proper maintenance of your drain field starts with closely checking water usage and what goes into your septic system. NEVER drive or park vehicles over your drain field. Make sure gutters and sump pumps empty water far away from the drain field. AVOID planting trees and shrubs close to the drain field, as roots could interfere with pipes.