

SEPTIC SYSTEM DO'S & DON'T'S

Septic systems can be very costly if not properly maintained and by following some simple guidelines you can even extend the life of your system.

DO:

- Conserve water
- Space out laundry days
- Fix leaky sinks, toilets or shower fixtures
- Keep lint trap clean in clothes washer
- Substitute harsh detergents and cleaners with friendlier products
- Use liquid detergents instead of powder
- Know where your septic system components are
- Keep a copy of your asbuilt on file
- Take immediate action if an alarm sounds or sewage is surfacing
- Pump your septic tank regularly
- Have your septic system inspected and maintained annually
- Keep your service provider information on file

DON'T:

- Use excessive amounts of water
- Flush cleaners, chemicals or medicines down toilet
- Use septic "additives"
- Use garbage disposals
- Dispose of grease, condoms, tampons, etc. down the toilet
- Turn off the power to your septic system, use silence switch or button
- Allow people or animals to come in contact with your sewage
- Landscape, dig, concrete over, build deck or put fence posts in or on your septic system
- Direct gutters, downspouts or surface water toward any part of the septic system
- Discharge water softeners or hot tubs into the septic system
- Drive on any part of your septic system

For additional information please give us a call (360) 387-1731 or email to contact@envirotekwa.com

SEPTIC SYSTEM ITEMS TO AVOID

The following guidance is a collaborative effort of wastewater professionals within the National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA). Many operational problems exist today because owners are either unaware of the results of daily practices to these systems. NOWRA's goal is to ensure that owners are educated and informed about the safe practices for their treatment systems, in order to avoid costly repairs and to protect groundwater quality. **The items listed below are known to have caused failures of onsite treatment systems** and must be considered if waste generated by/from a particular site will contain them in excessive quantities. Since excessive is a subjective word, it is highly recommended by NOWRA that you share concerns with your Wastewater Professional to come up with a treatment strategy for your particular needs.

Inert Materials:

Plastic, Rubber, Scouring Pads, Dental Floss, Kitty Litter, Cigarette Filters, Bandages, Hair, Mop Strings, Lint, Rags, Cloth and Towels do not degrade in an on-site treatment system. Inert Materials will build up solids, and lead to system malfunction, clogging or increased pump out frequency.

Paper Products:

Disposable Diapers, Paper Towels, Facial Tissues, Baby Wipes, Lotions, Scented or Quilted Toilet tissue, and Moist Toilet Paper do not dissolve readily in an onsite treatment system. Excessive Amounts of toilet tissue will also not decompose. All can lead to system malfunction, back-up or increased pump out frequency.

Food Wastes:

Do not put Animal Fats & Bones, Grease, Coffee Grounds, Citrus & Melon Rinds, Corn Cobs, or Egg Shells down the sink. Garbage disposal use should be limited to waste that cannot be scooped out and thrown in the trash. Spoiled Dairy Products and Yeasts from home Brewery or Baking may cause excessive growth of microbes that do not degrade sewage.

Household Products:

Do not flush Baby Wipes, Lotions, Scented or Quilted Toilet tissue, Female Sanitary Products, Cotton Balls or Swabs, or Condoms. Anti-microbial Soaps and Automatic Disinfection Tablets (blue, clear or otherwise) may kill the organisms needed to consume waste.

Items to Avoid in an Onsite Sewage System

Medications/Aliments:

Normal use of over the counter medications do not affect the performance of onsite systems. Do not flush expired Medicines/Antibiotics into an onsite treatment system. Some prescription medications are known to cause biological disrupt. Among these diseases or conditions are those suffering from bulimia, severe infections (including AIDS), chronic diarrhea, intestinal/colon by- pass, or other gastrointestinal conditions and cancer. Oral or intravenous chemotherapy is known to cause severe disruption to the treatment process and will require more frequent pump out intervals or the use of biologically based additives.

Commercial Additives:

Both the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Small Flows Clearing House have reported that there is no evidence to support the use of additives with normally functioning Onsite Treatment Systems. Some Septic Tank additives have been shown to do more harm than good. A normally functioning system should not require additives.

Chemicals & Toxins:

These materials kill the microbes necessary for the biological treatment to occur. Paint, Paint Thinner, Solvents, Volatile Substances, Drain Cleaners, Automotive Fluids, Fuels, Pesticides, Herbicides, Fertilizers, Metals, Disinfectants, Sanitizers, Bleach, Mop Water, Floor Stripping Wastes, Excessive use of Household chemicals, and Backwash from Water Softener regeneration.

Laundry Practices:

On-site systems must process the water as it enters the system. Laundry should be spread out over the week, not all run at one time. Excessive use of Detergents, especially those containing bleach, can affect system performance. Liquid detergents are recommended over powders. Fabric Softener sheets are recommended over liquid softeners. Bleach should be used sparingly and at half the rate indicated on the container.

Clear Water Waste:

From A/C Discharge lines, Floor Drains, Gutters, Whole House Water Treatment Systems and Sump Pumps can increase the flow to your treatment system. These flows can at least disrupt, if not destroy your treatment process.

Information can be found at <http://www.wossa.org/consumer.html>

SEPTIC SYSTEM FAQ'S

- 1) What is a septic system?
- 2) How long do they last?
- 3) What is a reserve area?
- 4) How do I know when to pump my tank?
- 5) What does the alarm mean?
- 6) How much will it cost to replace my system?
- 7) What the deal with septic inspections?

1) What is a septic system?

A septic system is a mixture of components and soil to treat human waste and greywater before it reaches our drinking water, aquifers, and water-ways.

2) How long do they last?

Most septic systems should last 20 years. This can be extended by 10 or more years with proper maintenance and pumping.

3) What is a reserve area?

Reserve area is a protected location that was designated (unless prior to 80's) for a new drainfield when the primary one fails.

4) How do I know when to pump my tank?

A septic tank ready to be pumped when it reaches 1/3 the working volume in solids (scum & sludge) and this is determined by your local service provider during an inspection. Pumping is typically every 3-5 years

5) What does the alarm mean?

If your septic system has an alarm then this indicates the waste levels are too high and in danger of backing up into the house. Call your trusted full service septic company within 24 hrs.

6) How much will it cost to replace my system?

This is more complicated because of all the variables but ranges from gravity to pretreatment and ranges from \$3500 - \$25,000+.

7) What's the deal with septic inspection?

A septic inspection is a review of the entire septic system which came about by way of a Washington State Law passed in July 2007. This regulation was due to the hazards human waste has on our environment, public health and shellfish harvesting when septic fail. Unfortunately your sewage does not stay on your property when it fails, it travels by way of stormwater, ditches, aquifers, etc. NOT all inspectors are created equal! We discover through our thorough inspection that some previous inspectors do a "fly-by" review and miss a lot of important elements to keep the system working

144 NE Camano Drive
Camano Island, WA 98282

Office: (360) 387-1731
Fax: (360) 925-3060
Email: contact@envirotekwa.com

LANDSCAPING AROUND SEPTIC SYSTEMS

Choosing the right landscaping options to go over or around your septic components is important to ensure you achieve the maximum number of years from your system by keeping roots out.

IMPORTANT: Keep your tank(s) and drainfield components accessible for pump, inspections, and maintenance.

BEST GROUND COVER

Grass

OTHER ACCEPTABLE COVER

Ornamental grasses
Kinnickinick
Carpet Heathers
Periwinkle
Bunchberry
Chameleon

NOT ACCEPTABLE COVER

Trees
Shrubs
Bamboo
Deep rooted plants
Decks
Concrete



Yard nicely landscaped with the lids camouflaged in. Grass is the best groundcover for all septic components.



This natural flag stone patio that still provides access to your septic tank covers and can be removed for extensive work.



Gravel is another alternative coverage for your septic system especially when placed in a pathway.



Severe root damage to drainfield, we were able to pull most roots out and jet the rest of the lines to prolong the drainfield life.



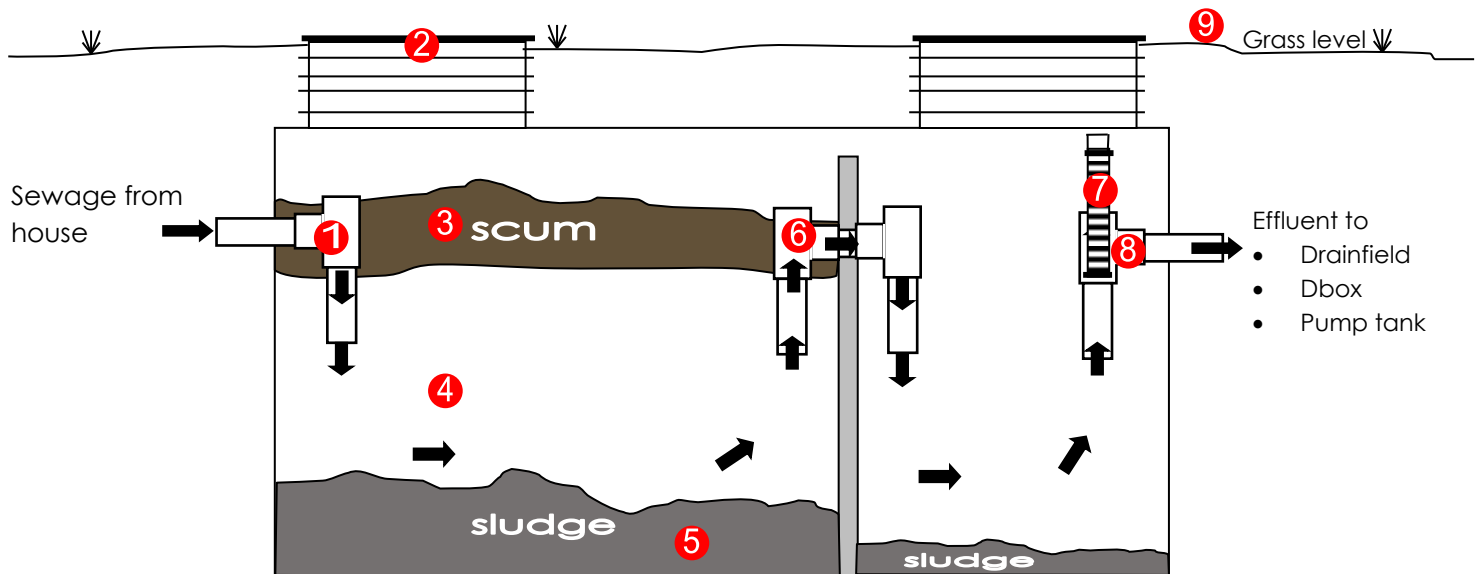
Root intrusion into tank. Found too late and caused riser damage along with other expensive repairs.



Root intrusion into drainfield. Roots filled the piping and caused the drainfield to prematurely fail.

Keep all deep-rooted plants, trees, shrubs at least 30 feet away from septic components. Nothing will stop roots from penetrating pipe, tanks, d-boxes or drainfields to reach a water supply.

SEPTIC TANK (1000 GALLONS)



- 1) **Inlet baffle** – liquids & solids are directed down into the clear zone so there is little disruption to the scum mat and allows for proper separating zones
- 2) **Riser & Lid** – A riser and lid covers the access points of the septic tank and are brought to grade for easy servicing. Important for cleaning and inspecting
- 3) **Scum mat** – this mat consists of floating solids like fats, oils, grease and toilet paper
- 4) **Clear zone** – the clear zone is mostly liquid and little solids that flow to the second compartment or if single compartment tank it will go directly to a d-box or drainfield.
- 5) **Sludge** – this is the heavier solids like organic material such as food scraps, turds, etc. and along with the scum mat will need to be emptied to prevent clogging of baffles and proper biological digestion
- 6) **Cross-over baffle** – this allows the liquid to flow over keeping solids in the first compartment so the outlet filter does not clog easily
- 7) **Outlet filter** – this filter helps prevent solids from exiting the tank to the drainfield that can cause system failure
- 8) **Outlet baffle** – this baffle helps prevent solids from exiting the tank to the drainfield
- 9) **Ground cover** – keeping landscaping, grass, decks, etc. from covering the access lids will be your part in helping maintain the septic system