Septic System Maintenance Tips

Taking care of your septic system isn’t difficult, because modern systems function efficiently when you follow a few basic guidelines. Put these tips to use for a clean and trouble-free septic system.

Divert Rainwater From the Septic Drainfield

- A soggy drainfield won’t absorb and neutralize liquid waste. Plan landscaping, roof gutters and foundation drains so that excess water is diverted away from the septic drainfield.

Don’t Overload the Septic Tank and Drainfield

- Check faucets and toilets for leaks; make repairs if necessary.
- Use aerators on faucets and flow reducer nozzles on showers to help lower water consumption.
- Reduce water levels for small loads of laundry.
- Wait until the dishwasher is full to run it.
- Use a displacer to reduce the amount of water needed to flush the toilet.

Keep Trees Away from the Septic System

- Discourage root damage by keeping trees at least 100 feet away from the septic system.
- Trees with very aggressive roots, such as willows and Chinese elms, should be even farther away from the system.

The Toilet Isn’t a Garbage Disposal

- Never flush cat litter, disposable diapers, sanitary napkins, tampons, paper towels, facial tissues, coffee grounds, or cigarette butts and filters. They’ll clog your septic tank in less time than you might imagine.

Use Garbage Disposals Wisely

- A garbage disposal can double the amount of solids added to a septic tank.
- Choose a top-line disposal that grinds food into tiny particles that are easier for a system to digest.

Minimize Heavy Duty Cleaners

- Overuse of heavy cleaners kills beneficial bacteria in the septic tank, so solids won’t break down as well. The use of the proper enzymes will help your septic tank break down waste.

Do Not Pour Grease Down the Drain

- Grease can clog the septic tank and drainfield, making it impossible for soil to absorb liquids. If that happens you’ll need a new drainfield.
Avoid Hazardous Chemicals

- Varnish, paint thinners, motor oils, gasoline and other similar chemicals can ruin your system and are a hazard to groundwater. Dispose of them properly. Do not put chlorine down your drain or in your septic system.

Protect the System from Damage

- Do not drive over the drainfield, build barriers around it to protect from crushing.
- Do plant grass or other vegetation on the drainfield to minimize soil erosion.

Perform Regular Maintenance

- Solids must eventually be pumped from the tank. A family of four with a 1,000 gallon septic tank should have the tank pumped after 3-5 years of full time use. If you are very careful of what goes into your septic system you can go much longer between pumping operations.
- Never attempt to open a septic tank yourself. Gases and bacteria in it are dangerous
- Just because your septic tank is full of water does not mean it is time to pump your tank. A septic tank needs to be full of liquid to operate properly and send water to the drainfield. A septic pumping should only be to remove the solids from your system.