

# Simple Septic Maintenance: A Win for Your Wallet & Wastewater

## About Septic Systems– the Four Pieces

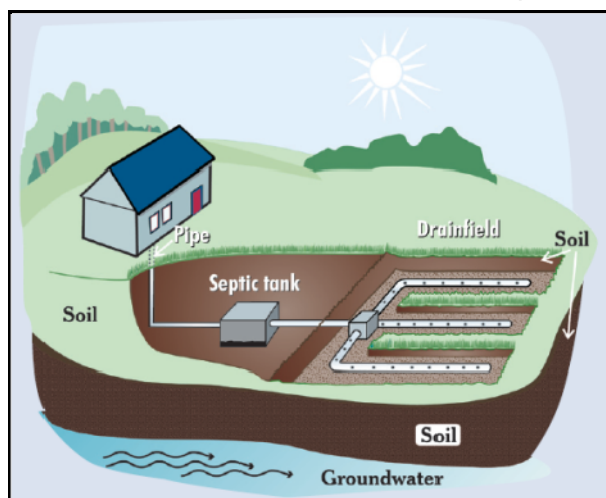
Your septic system treats wastewater through a variety of physical and biological processes. The pipe goes from the home or business to the septic tank. The septic tank receives the wastewater, separates the solid waste from liquid waste, stores the solid waste, and passes the liquid waste out to the drainfield. The drainfield allows the liquid waste to slowly seep out into the soil which provides final treatment by removing bacteria and nutrients from the wastewater. Malfunctioning septic systems may contaminate water resources and may need to be replaced.

## Septic System Maintenance

**Annual Check:** The solid waste captured in the septic tank must be inspected by a licensed and bonded septic-pumping contractor annually, and should be pumped out as frequently as recommended by the inspector. Over accumulation of waste can damage the drainfield. An average residential septic system may be pumped once every 3-5 years, and depends on the size of your tank and the number of users. The inspection should also cover the alarm, pump, baffles and timer.

**Reduce Water Use:** the less water your home uses, the less wastewater your septic system must manage, extending the life and efficiency. It is estimated that a dripping faucet can waste five gallons per day and a leaky toilet as much as 200 gallons each day! It is essential to find and eliminate leaks in toilets and turn faucets off completely when they are not in use. Also:

- Consider installing a low flow toilet, showerheads, faucets
- Run dishwashers and washing machines with full loads
- Consider installing a high-efficiency washing machine next time you buy one



Graphic adapted from USEPA's Homeowner's Guide to Septic Systems publication.

## Items that should be kept out of your septic system:

### Household Items:

- Dental floss
- Cigarette butts
- Cat litter or diapers
- Washing machine lint (use a filter)
- Feminine hygiene products
- Paper towels

### Chemicals:

- Gasoline
- Oils
- Pesticides
- Antifreeze
- Paints or paint thinner

### Food Waste:

- Coffee grounds
- Cooking oils and fats

**Manage Your Drainfield:** The same water conservation and careful flushing measures that keep your septic tank running properly will also help maintain your drainfield. Keep the soil beneath your drainfield:

- Un-compacted– avoid driving heavy vehicles over drainfield
- Unsaturated– direct drainage from gutters, driveways, etc. away from drainfield
- Undisturbed– avoid activity on your drainfield including the planting of trees

