



## Septic System Maintenance

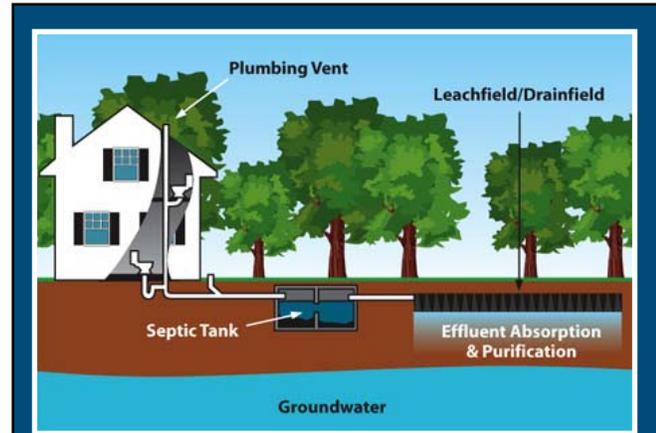
As a homeowner you are responsible for maintaining your onsite wastewater treatment system (OWTS) - or septic system. This not only protects nearby surface and groundwaters from being contaminated, but also protects your health and your investment in your home.

Typical pollutants found in household wastewater include nitrogen, phosphorus, and disease-causing bacteria and viruses. A properly designed, constructed, and maintained system can provide long-term, effective treatment of household wastewater. If not properly maintained, a failing system can cost thousands of dollars to replace.

### Keep an eye out for signs of a failed system:

- pooling water or muddy soil around the tank or drainfield or in your basement
- bad smell coming from area of tank
- toilet or sink backs up with you flush or do laundry
- bright green grass over the drainfield

If you notice any of these signs - call a professional.



### A typical septic system has 4 main parts:

- a pipe from the home that carries the wastewater into the tank
- a tank that holds the water long enough for the solids to settle out to the bottom and the oil & grease to float to the surface
- a drainfield where the water from the tank is discharged
- the soil where the microbes provide the final treatment



### Alternative Systems

Due to unsuitable soils, high bedrock or groundwater, or small lot size - you may have a hard time making a traditional septic system work on your property.

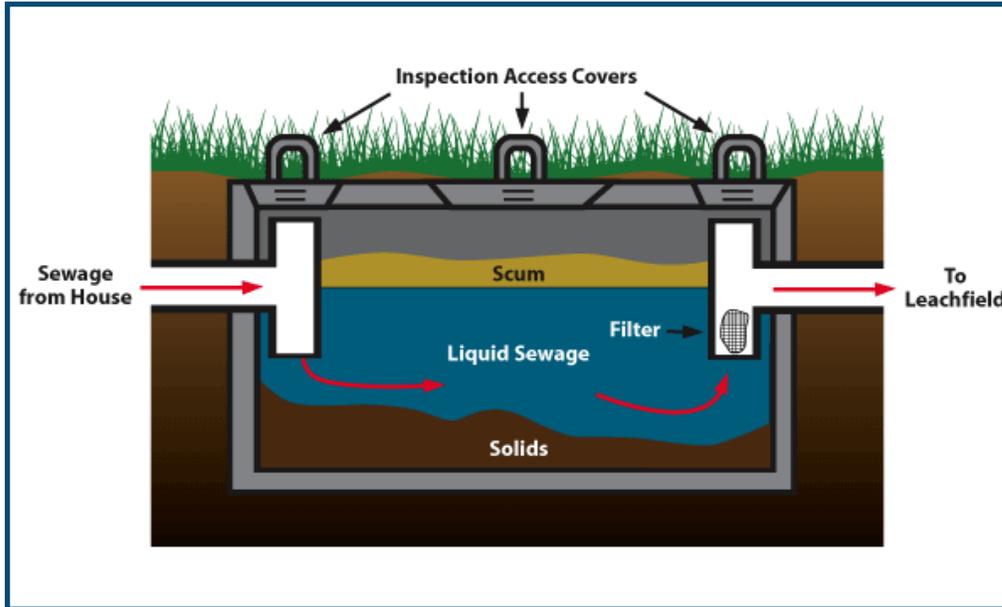
There are alternative systems now available that use new technologies to improve treatment processes - many of which need less space to function. Such systems use sand, peat, or plastic media instead of soil to treat the wastewater. Contact our office at 518-668-3558 to learn more about these alternative systems.

*Photo above is a Puraflo system that uses peat moss as a filter.*





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**Avoid overloading your system with more water than it is meant to handle.**

- Don't do multiple loads of laundry all in one day.
- Don't drain a hot tub or pool into your tank or over your drainfield.
- Some water softeners or filters flush themselves daily. Make sure these aren't discharging into your system.

### How to Maintain your System:

- 1. Regularly inspect your system and pump your tank as necessary.** It's a good idea to have your system inspected every 2-3 years. In general, it should be pumped every 3-5 years but this depends on how much your system is used and its size. Your inspector can determine when it is time to pump your tank.
- 2. Use water efficiently.** The less water you use, the less water that enters your system. This helps it operate properly and reduces stress on your system and the risk of a failure.
- 3. Don't dispose of household hazardous wastes in sinks or toilets.** Avoid paints, chemicals, cleaners, gasoline, oil, or other toxic materials that could kill the good bacteria in your system as well as things that can clog pipes such as diapers, coffee grounds, feminine hygiene products, paper towels, and grease & fat from cooking. Avoid frequent use of a garbage disposal. Normal use of antibacterial products such as handsoap is fine - avoid excessive use which might kill too many beneficial bacteria in your system for it to continue to work properly. Additives are not needed.
- 4. Care for your drainfield.** Plant only grass or groundcover with shallow roots over or near your septic. Deep roots could clog and damage the drainfield. Don't drive or park vehicles on the drainfield either. This could compact soil or damage the pipes. Keep roof drains, sump pump drains, and other surfacewater runoff away from the drainfield to avoid flooding it.