

# Septic Care

## ✓ Do

- ✓ Know where your septic is, & protect it!
- ✓ Inspect system (+ tank levels) annually.
- ✓ Pump tank regularly (every 3–5 years, or when solids fill 1/3 of tank).
- ✓ Use water wisely.
- ✓ Go easy on the garbage disposal (use compost or trash).
- ✓ Keep vehicles off tank & drainfield areas.
- ✓ Plant grass—or other very shallow-rooted plants—over drainfield **AS SHOWN ON THIS PAGE!**\*
- ✓ Keep deep-rooting, water-loving plants—especially trees & shrubs—away from all components (they can invade pipes & damage system).
- ✓ Reduce water use: **USE COMMON SENSE!**
  - use low-flow faucets, showers, toilets
  - run & drain appliances one at a time (dishwasher, washing machine)
  - spread laundry over entire week & avoid partial loads
  - showers use less water than baths
  - limit shower length & turn water off when lathering
  - fix all faucet & toilet leaks promptly
  - turn water off while brushing, shaving, or rinsing.
- ✓ Drain water from hot tubs onto ground, away from drainfield, and not into storm drain or surface waters.
- ✓ Use phosphate-free detergent, & only manufacturer's recommended amount.
- ✓ Direct runoff from roofs, streets, driveways, & adjoining properties away from drainfield.
- ✓ Divert subsurface water movement with curtain drains (placed so as not to pick up sewage effluent).
- ✓ Keep any irrigation (sprinkler) system at least 10 feet from edge of septic system (water lines should never cross open sewer lines).
- ✓ And did we say, **Conserve Water?**
- ✓ Locate your as-built, or map location of all septic parts.
  - ✓ Keep accurate, detailed records (inspections, pumping, repairs, servicing professionals, etc.).
  - ✓ Keep septic tank lids easily accessible (install risers).
  - ✓ Pass along all septic records & information to new owner or tenant of property.
  - ✓ Save loose change to cover future septic service.
  - ✓ Display this list to clue in your family, guests, or patrons who use your septic system.

\* Pictured plants are sample groundcovers, wildflowers, bulbs, grasses, flowers, & ferns suitable for drainfield & reserve areas.

## ✗ Do Not

- ✗ Use garbage disposal (solids & grease into system may lead to drainfield failure).
- ✗ Drive/Park vehicles or heavy equipment (including boats!) over drainfield or reserve drainfield (nothing bigger than a riding lawnmower).
- ✗ Use tank additives or “miracle” system cleaners.
- ✗ Flush non-biodegradable solid wastes:
  - \* diapers •\* cigarette butts •\* coffee grounds •\* tampons
  - \* sanitary napkins •\* condoms •\* grease •\* oils •\* paper products other than t.p. •\* plastics •\* bones •\* Kitty litter.
- ✗ Pour strong chemicals, like cleaning products, down drain (household hazardous wastes can destroy septic critters + contaminate groundwater & surface water):
  - ✗ drain cleaners ✗ solvents ✗ paint & paint thinners
  - ✗ floor & sink cleaners ✗ excessive amounts of bleach
  - ✗ motor oil ✗ antifreeze ✗ pesticides ✗ photo chemicals.
- ✗ Discard medications (like antibiotics) or anti-bacterial products down drains (“anti” = kill critters)
- ✗ Plant trees, shrubs, or vegetable garden over drainfield (poplar, willow, lilacs, & root vegetables really bad).
- ✗ Work the soil (some septic parts just 6" under).
- ✗ Run storm drainage into septic system.
- ✗ Drain water from hot tubs into system (water overload + chlorine bad for septic critters).
- ✗ Drain (or allow backwash from) water softeners or conditioners into system.
- ✗ Compact soils of drainfield or reserve area *in any way*, by:
  - building patios, carports, decks, additions, sports courts, or storage sheds over any part of septic system (also prevents access; can still be a problem if downslope from drainfield & blocks normal drain pattern);
  - grazing livestock.
- ✗ Cover drainfield or reserve area *in any way* (retains moisture + reduces oxygen exchange), by:
  - using landscaping plastic or fabric, gravel, bark, or other mulch
  - paving asphalt or concrete
  - adding more than enough topsoil to support shallow-rooted plants or
  - setting up a swimming pool.
- ✗ Allow driveways to cross over sewage system.
- ✗ Grade, level, fill, or cut drainfield or reserve.
- ✗ Install sprinkler system in drainfield.
- ✗ Plant water-loving plants over drainfield (watering will saturate soils and foil system's design to treat, evaporate, & disperse wastewater).

♻️ Printed on recycled paper