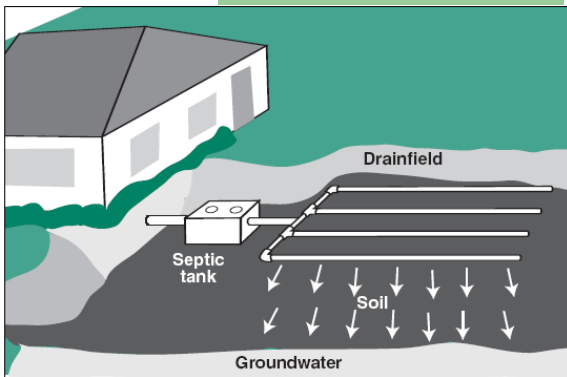


Smart Practices

When your septic system is properly installed and managed, you will have a waste disposal system that is simple, economical, effective, safe and long-lasting.

The practices you follow at home can affect the water quality at your home and your neighborhood.

Protect your drinking water by regularly pumping your tank and being aware of what you are disposing of in your household drains.



Soggy or lush, green grass growing over your drainfield may indicate your septic system is not operating properly

**For more information, contact:
Michigan Water Stewardship
Program:**

**Michigan Department of
Agriculture
PO Box 30017
Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 335-6529**

Managing Your Septic System

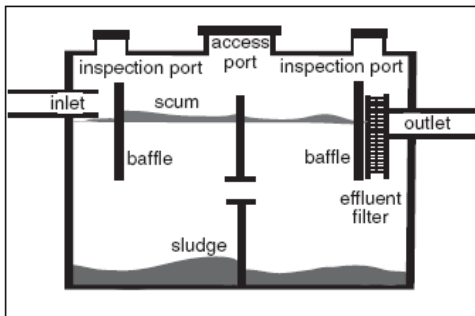


Michigan Water
Stewardship Program

How the Septic Tank Functions

The typical septic tank is a large, buried, rectangular, or cylindrical container made of concrete, fiber-glass, or polyethylene.

Wastewater from your toilet, bath, kitchen, laundry, etc., flows into the tank. Heavy solids settle to the bottom where bacterial action partially decomposed them to digested sludge and gases. Most of the lighter solids, such as fats and greases, rises to the top and form a scum layer. The partially treated effluent then leaves the septic tank and flows to the drain field.



Septic System Maintenance

Most septic tanks must be pumped once every three to five years, depending on tank size, number of people in the household, and whether or not occupants are minimizing release of unnecessary solids into the wastewater.

Below is a table of how often to pump your septic tank when considering these factors.

Estimated Number of Years Between Pumping

		Number of People in Household					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
Tank Size (gal)	500	5.5	2.5	1.5	1	.5	.5
	1000	12	5.5	3.5	2.5	2	1.5
	1,500	18.5	9	5.5	4	3	2.5
	2,000	25	12	8	5.5	4.5	3.5



Recommendations

- 1) **Minimize the amount of water entering the septic system.** Practice water conservation. Repair leaky faucets and toilets. When possible, keep water softener backwash out of the septic system.
- 2) **Avoid using a garbage disposal unit.** Make compost out of vegetable wastes, coffee grounds, eggshells and other compostable kitchen wastes.
- 3) **Eliminate release of non-degradable materials.** Such as fats, paper towels, hair, tampons, sanitary napkins and disposable diapers.
- 4) **Never release toxic chemicals** such as solvents, disinfectants, oils, paints, paint thinner and pesticides.
- 5) **Keep surface of drain field properly drained** by redirecting downspouts and sump pump outflow, and not stockpiling snow over the area.
- 6) **Do not install automatic sprinklers** over the tank and drain field.
- 7) **Landscape over septic system** with dense grass cover and other **shallow-rooted** plants.
- 8) **Avoid impermeable or compacted surfaces over the drain field** such as concrete, asphalt, plastic or compacted soil from vehicular traffic.
- 9) **Stay away from additives.** Their benefits have not been demonstrated, and some may actually harm your system and contaminate groundwater.
- 10) **Save fertilizer** by not fertilizing over the drain field