

SEPTIC SYSTEMS



Conservation
ONTARIO
Natural Champions

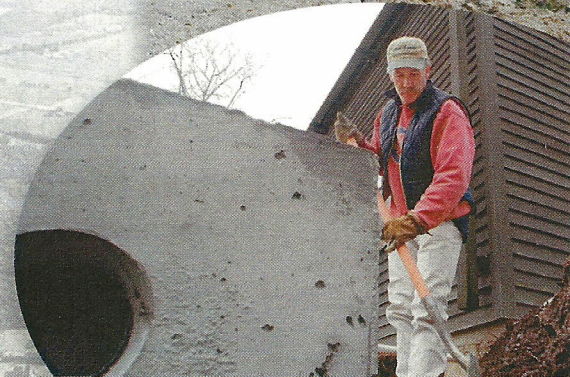
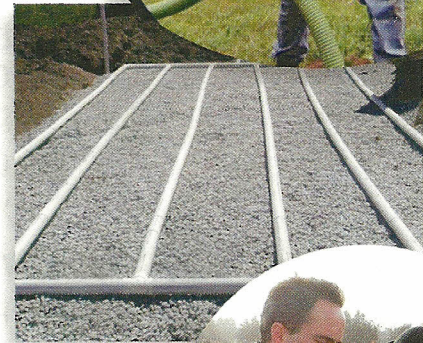
How can I Keep my Septic System Working Properly?

1 Get to Know Your Septic System.

- Know the location of your septic tank and what sort of material it is made from.
- Know the size and shape of your leaching bed.

2 Maintain Your Septic System Properly:

- Have your septic system inspected at least every three years.
- Pump your septic tank as needed (generally every three to five years).
- Service and maintain treatment units and effluent filters according to manufacturer instructions.
- Have the tank replaced if not sound (e.g. steel tanks are susceptible to decay and last only 20 to 25 years) or if undersized for sewage flows.
If you turn a seasonal residence into a permanent one, or add members to your family, your septic system may need to be resized to function properly.
- Install an effluent filter to the outflow pipe leading from your septic tank to your leaching bed. An effluent filter will prevent solids from entering and clogging the leaching bed and is a cheap way to prevent costly tile bed repairs.
- Locate all pump chambers and ensure that pumps and alarms are working properly (if your system has them).
- Keep records of pumping, maintenance and repair.



3 Be Careful About What Goes Into Your Septic System:

- Take household hazardous wastes to your municipal hazardous waste facility. If you pour wastes such as paint, grease, pesticides, solvents, thinners, nail polish remover, kerosene, antifreeze, gas or oil down drains or into toilets, they can seep into the groundwater. They may also prevent your septic system from working properly.
- Avoid using disinfectants like bleach, caustic toilet bowl cleaners and drain cleaners which kill beneficial bacteria in your tank and may cause sewage to pass through the system without proper treatment.
- Look for liquid detergents or concentrated detergents that don't contain phosphates which can harm local water quality.
- Keep household items, such as dental floss, feminine hygiene products, condoms, diapers, food solids, hair, washing machine lint and cat litter out of your system. These can clog your leaching bed and pipes.
- Check with your local health department before using septic tank additives. Commercial septic tank additives do not eliminate the need for periodic pumping and can be harmful to your system.
- Garboraters should not be used on most conventional septic systems. They will fill the tank much more rapidly and you'll need more frequent pump-outs.

4 Be Careful About What Goes Over Your Septic System:

- Plant only grass over and near your leaching bed to aid in evaporation and prevent erosion.
- Don't allow trees or shrubs to grow too close to the leaching bed or tank as their roots can clog or damage your system.
- Do not apply manure or fertilizers over the leaching bed.
- Keep vehicles and livestock off your leaching bed and away from your septic tank. Excessive weight can damage the pipes and tank, and your system may not drain properly under compacted soil.
- Keep gutters and basement sump pumps from draining into or near your leaching bed, avoid heavy lawn watering and divert other forms of runoff.

5 Conserve Water Flowing to the System.

- Use low flow showerheads, low flush toilets and fix any leaking plumbing fixtures. Excessive water flowing into the septic tank, from overuse of toilets, laundry, dishwasher, showers, and baths, can cause the sludge to be disturbed, allow the solids to pass out of the tank and clog your leaching bed pipes and even your leaching bed.

6 Ensure that Renters or Guests are Aware of your septic system and its proper use.

