

Your Map

Maintenance Record

Keeping a record of when your septic system is pumped will help you plan when the next cleaning should be scheduled.

Size of Tank _____ Gallons

Date	Work Done	Firm	Cost
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Your Septic System Pumper

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Proper maintenance, as explained in this folder, is the key to ensuring a long life for your septic system. Protect your investment and ensure it against the high cost of septic system failure.


New regulations require that your septic system be inspected if you are selling your house.

Call your Board of Health if you have any questions about this process.

For more in-depth information about septic systems contact your local Board of Health or UMass Extension Office.

Produced by UMass Extension staff with some adaptations from the Northern Virginia Planning District Commission's Septic System Guide; funded by the Environmental Trust of Massachusetts.

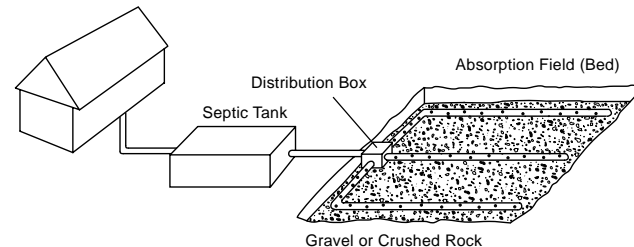
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A REFERENCE GUIDE
FOR HOMEOWNERS

Septic Sense



The purpose of your septic system (or cesspool) is to dispose of your household waste water in a way that does not contaminate groundwater, wells, nearby streams, ponds or coastal waters.

United States Department of Agriculture cooperating.

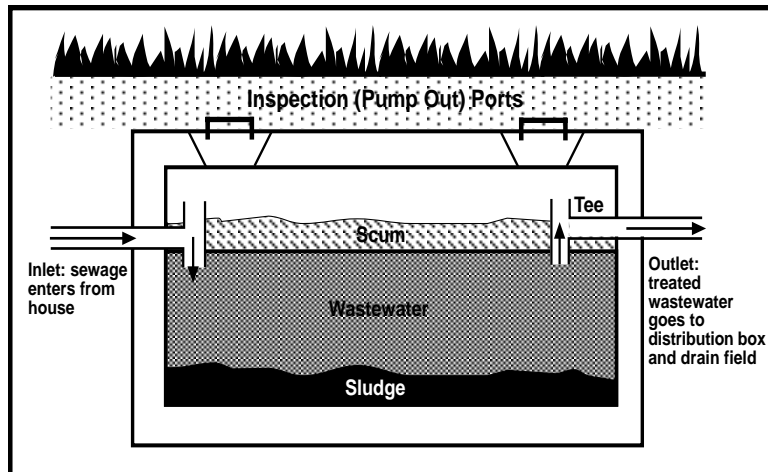
Caring for Your Septic System

The waste water leaving your house comes from sinks, toilets, showers, and the washing machine and dishwasher. It carries solids, grease, dirt, chemicals, bacteria and viruses. It needs quite a bit of cleaning before it can safely be dumped into a pond or into the ground water. Your septic system does just that.

While not all septic systems are the same, most modern ones (constructed since 1978) consist of a septic tank, a distribution box, and a leaching facility.

In your **septic tank**, the solids settle to the bottom (sludge) and the grease floats to the top (scum).

The partially clarified water moves from the tank into the **leaching facility** where it leaches through a layer of soil before it reaches the underground water table. The soil and the microbes and bacteria living in it help to purify the waste water. (Older systems, often called cesspools, do not have a leaching facility and are considered inadequate treatment.)



Tips to Avoid Trouble

Keeping these components functioning well is relatively simple if you follow these tips:

- Do** have your tank pumped out and system inspected every three to five years. Contact your Board of Health for a septic contractor licensed in your town.
- Do** keep a record of pumping, inspections and repairs. It will come in handy when you want to sell or rent your house.
- Do** practice water conservation. Repair drips and leaks. Use water-saving showers, toilets and faucets. Avoid heavy use of water at any one time.
- Do** use your garbage disposal sparingly. It puts a heavy burden on your septic system.
- Do** divert roof drains and surface water run-off away from your septic system.
- Do** keep a map of the location of your system components and make sure all household members are aware of what is underground.
- Do** use household chemicals such as bleach, disinfectants, drain and toilet bowl cleaners in accordance with product labels.

- Don't** drive or park over any part of your system!
- Don't** plant shrubs or trees over your system! Roots may clog and damage your lines or leach field.
- Don't** use your toilet as a trash can or for food disposal!
- Don't** dispose of cooking oil, fat and grease in your septic system.
- Don't** use commercial septic system additives. At best they are harmless and a waste of money; at worst they hurt your system. They are not an alternative to regular maintenance, which is cheaper in the long run.
- Don't** make or allow any repairs to your system without the proper permits from your Board of Health.
- Don't** pour hazardous household chemicals down the drain.

