



HOW TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY SEPTIC SYSTEM

Easy Tips

If you don't mind planning ahead a little, you can save thousands of dollars in maintenance costs for your septic system. Here's how.

Many of these tips help reduce the volume of wastewater going into the septic system, and help avoid the use of chemicals which interfere with how well the septic system does its job.

In the laundry

- Wash your laundry in stages over several days- this will avoid flooding the system with large amounts of water at one time
- Use low-phosphorus or phosphorus-free detergents. Phosphorus is a major pollutant of waterways and contributes to the growth of algal blooms.
- Report leaking taps and cisterns.
- Extend the life of your trench and avoid blockages by installing a lint filter on the washing machine- a stocking over the outlet hose will do.
- If you've got a blocked drain, use boiling water or a drain eel to clear the line, don't use caustic soda or drain cleaners in a septic tank.
- Front loading washing machines are best for households on septic systems because they use less water and detergents.

In the kitchen

- Use a sink strainer- this prevents particles of food getting into the septic system. Food scraps can slow down the digestion process and can make solids build up more quickly (so you need more frequent pump-outs).
- Don't pour oils and fats down the sink- they solidify and may block the system and build up in the tank. Instead, put small amounts in the compost or into a container such as a milk carton to throw out with your rubbish.

In the bathroom

- Report leaking taps.
- Minimise the use of commercial cleaners and bleaches- these can interfere with the bacterial breakdown in the tank. Instead, try using baking soda, vinegar, or a mild soap solution.
- Don't flush anything down the toilet that could clog up the system, such as plastic, grease, tampons, condoms, paper towels, plastics, or cat litter. These items will quickly fill up the tank, decreasing its efficiency and making it necessary to pump out more often.
- Don't leave taps running unnecessarily, for instance when cleaning teeth.

In and around the tank and trench area

- Only plant grass near the absorption field-roots from larger plants such as trees and shrubs are likely to damage the trench- and mow it regularly.
- Don't drive or park on any part of the absorption area. This will compact soil and may crush pipes and trench domes

How to manage greywater and greasetraps

Studies show that greywater contains significant amounts of pollutants and bacteria which are harmful to health and the environment. If you have a separate greywater system, keep your greywater as clean as possible by:

- Checking and cleaning the greasetrap every 2-4 weeks
- Cleaning the greywater tank at least twice a year
- Releasing greywater within two hours of it entering the tank (otherwise it can go bad and smelly)
- Spreading your washing over a few days, to reduce the load on the sullage absorption area
- Using strainers in the sink and lint filters in the laundry to prevent food and fibre going into the system
- Wiping grease out of pans before washing
- Using hot water to wash dishes to prevent build up grease in the sink
- Using hot water in the laundry to give a more efficient wash

