

WHAT EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT



SEPTIC TANK SYSTEMS

A Usage Guide from The Happy Honey Hunter™



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The Household Plumbing and Waste System





If you're like most people, you know very little about your septic tank system and this is understandable. In urban and suburban areas, there are sewers to carry household waste to municipal wastewater treatment facilities. In more rural areas, however, septic tank systems provide the functions of both sewers and treatment facilities.

All household waste is disposed of through the septic system which is essential to public and private health, property values, and the environment. See if you know enough about your septic system by answering the following questions. If you can't answer **ALL** of the questions, your septic system could become a huge aggravation, public nuisance, health hazard and/or financial burden.

*Septic Systems...
Paramount To YOUR health,
property value
And the environment!*

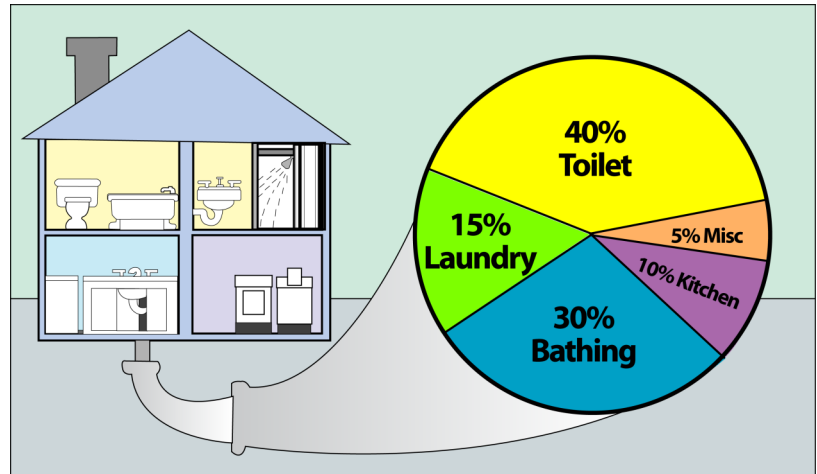
1. Do you know what a septic tank is and how it works?
2. Do you know what kind of soil absorption area you have and how it works?
3. Do you know what causes septic systems to fail?
4. Do you know what it costs to replace a failed septic system?
5. Do you know how to keep a septic system from failing?
6. Do you know that failed and failing systems contribute to pollution?



The Septic Tank System

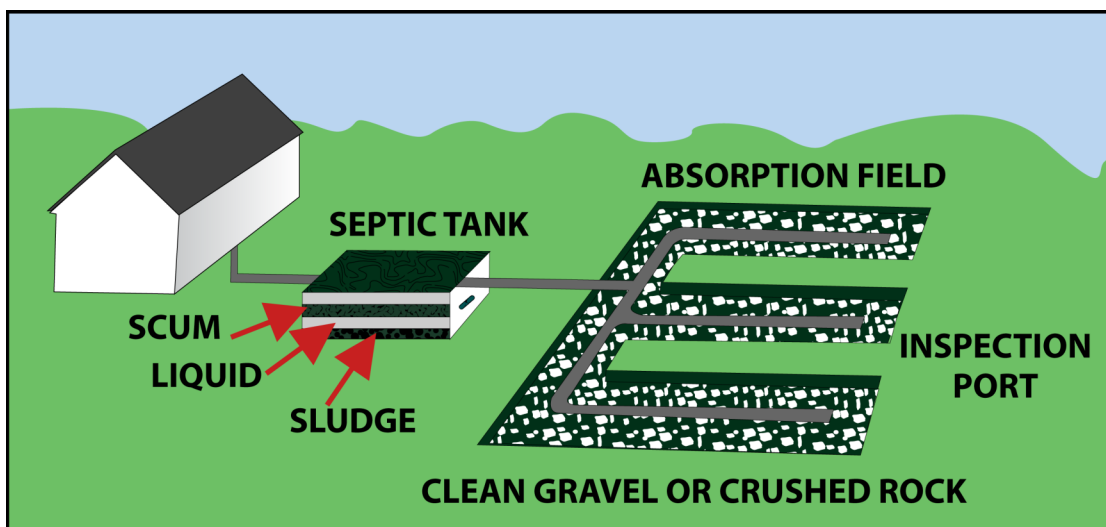
“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”, was never truer than it is with septic tank care. A small commitment to the care of your septic system will protect you indefinitely from the nightmare created by a failing system.

The quantity and composition of waste generated in the home varies according to the number of residents, their personal water usage, and the water-utilizing appliances in the home.



The Septic Tank System

Understanding how household waste is treated...from drain line to soil.



The septic tank system is a small, on-site sewage treatment and disposal system buried in the ground. The system has two essential parts: **1) the septic tank**, and **2) the soil absorption area**.



The Septic Tank

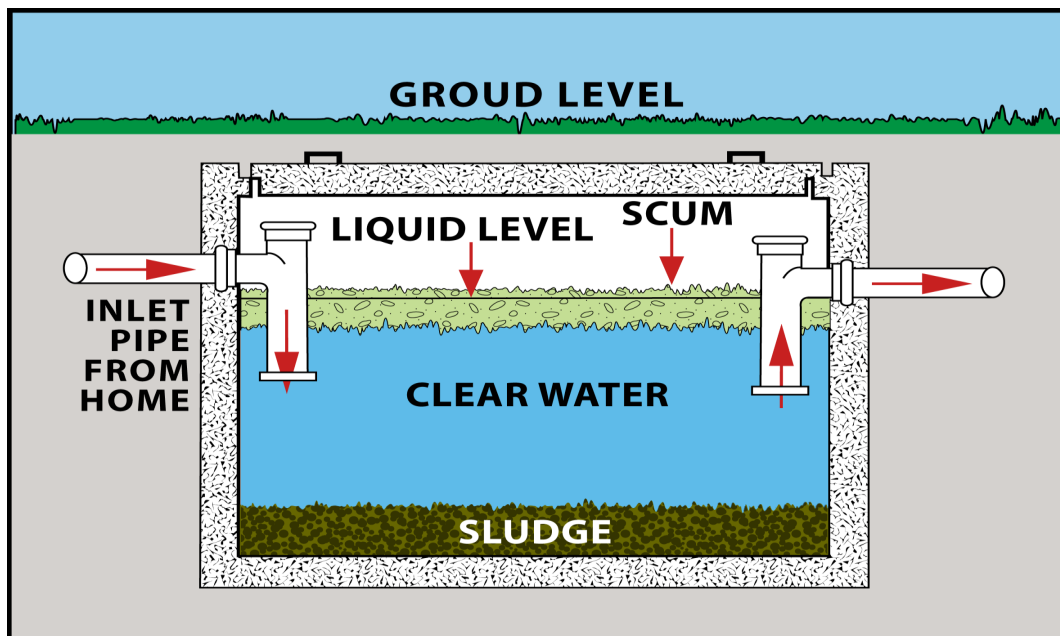
The septic tank was patented in London around 1900. Webster Dictionary defines the septic tank as a “tank in which waste matter is decomposed through bacterial action.” The modern septic tank is a watertight box usually made in precast concrete, plastic, concrete blocks, or reinforced fiberglass.

When household waste enters the septic tank, several things occur:

1. Organic solid material floats to the surface and forms a layer of what is commonly called “scum”. Bacteria in the

septic tank biologically convert this material to liquid.

2. Inorganic or inert solid materials and the by-products of bacterial digestion sink to the bottom of the tank and form a layer commonly known as “sludge”.
3. Only clear water should exist between the “scum” and “sludge” layers. It is clear water and **only** this clear water- that should overflow into the soil absorption area



FUNCTIONING SEPTIC TANK



The Soil Absorption Area

Solid materials overflowing into the soil absorption area should be avoided at all costs. It is this solids overflow that clogs soil pores and causes systems to fail. Two main factors cause solid material to build up enough to overflow: 1) bacterial deficiency, and 2) lack of sludge removal.

Bacteria **MUST BE PRESENT** in the septic tank to break down and digest the organic solids. Normal household waste provides enough bacteria to digest the solids **UNLESS** any harm is done to the bacteria. Bacteria are very sensitive to environmental changes. Check the labels of products that you normally use in the home. Products carrying harsh warnings such as '**HARMFUL OR FATAL IF SWALLOWED**' will harm bacteria.

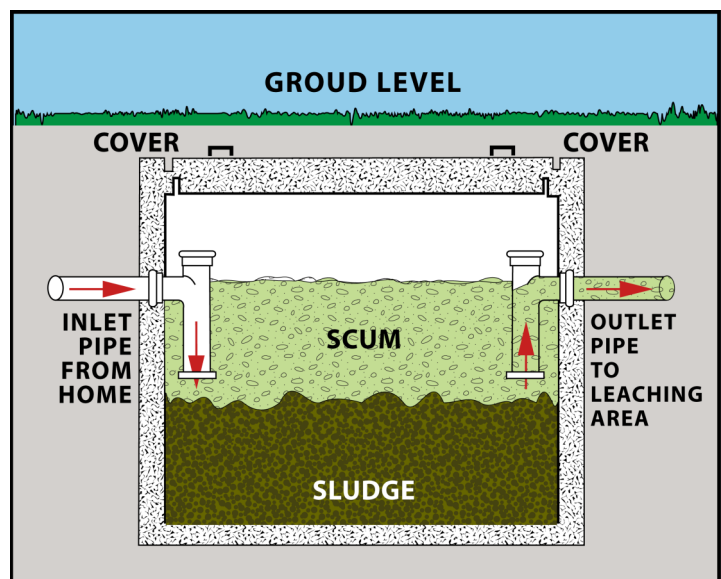
The following commonly used home care products, even when used according to the directions, can reduce the bacterial population required for proper septic tank operation.

People rarely think of the effect of these products on the septic tank system when the products go down the drain. What kind of effect do you think anti-bacterial soap and cleaners have on your septic tank?

-
- *acids* • *bleaches*
 - *caustic drain openers*
 - *cleaning compounds*
 - *detergents* • *disinfectants*
 - *polishes*
 - *sink and tub cleaners*
 - *toilet cleaners*
-

Bacteria must be present to digest the scum. If not digested, the scum will accumulate until it overflows, thus clogging the soil absorption area.

The sludge in the septic tank – inorganic and inert materials – is not biodegradable and will not decompose. If not removed, the sludge will accumulate until it eventually overflows, again clogging the soil absorption area. If enough of these contaminants are in the tank, you may need to pump the tank and start over.



CONTAMINATED SEPTIC TANK



Septic system maintenance means two simple things. First, sludge that accumulates in the bottom of the tank must be pumped out periodically. How frequently depends on the size of the tank, the use it gets, and the condition of the system. If not pumped out, the sludge will eventually overflow in the soil adsorption area. This will clog the system and it will need to be replaced at an enormous expense and inconvenience.



absorption system is blocked so badly that drainage is possible. The blockage takes varying lengths of time. But this is a fact: a neglected system **WILL** get blocked; it **WILL** overflow; it **WILL** have an obnoxious odor; it will contaminate and pollute. It may also require repair or even replacement. The first septic system “emergency”, a backup or overflow, often marks the beginning of a failing trend. Replacement costs vary, but they can be extremely expensive, especially if contaminated material needs to be removed.

The second part of septic system maintenance involves the bacteria necessary for solids digestion. If bacteria-killing products are used in the home, as they usually are, the bacteria should be replenished. If the bacteria level is too low, the solids may not be digested properly. Then the solids can build up too much and overflow into the soil absorption area. This again can clog the system, requiring major repair or replacement.

Your septic system tank could be overflowing solid material **RIGHT NOW**, and you won't know it until the soil

“A septic tank system will serve a home satisfactorily only if it is properly designed, installed and adequately maintained. Even a good system which does not have proper care and attention may become a nuisance, and burdensome expense.”

U.S. Government Department of Health,
Education, and Welfare, Public Health Service



For A Healthy Septic System

Do not overload your system. Use water sparingly. Do only full laundry and dishwasher loads at “off-peak” times if possible.

- Do not do all of our laundry in one day.
- Do not put kitchen grease down the drain.
- Do not flush cigarettes, sanitary napkins, disposable diapers, or other inorganic materials down the drain.
- Use garbage disposal sparingly or increase septic system maintenance schedule pumping.
- Check all plumbing fixtures for leaks.
- Ask if you think tree roots are clogging your pipes.



Questions and Answers

Q: What causes the thick crust in my tank?

A: The crust is the organic material that has congealed into a solid mass. This condition can indicate a bacterial deficiency. Ask us if your tank needs pumping and added bacteria to avoid future problems. We carry conveniently package live bacteria which you can add to your septic system monthly by dropping it into your stool and flushing.

Q: I had my tank pumped out last week. Is it possible that it is already full?

A: Not only is it possible, it's necessary. Septic tanks are designed to operate full for waste/solids separation.

Q: Is there anything that I can put in my tank to avoid pumping?

A: No. Some of the material in the tank is not biodegradable. This material must be pumped out.

Q: My system backed up recently for the first time in many years. Why should I start maintaining now?

A: Even though the backup may have been caused by broken pipes, tree roots, or some other obstruction, it is also possible that this backup is the first sign of system failure.

Q: The drainage in my house is sluggish and sometimes backs up. There is also a foul odor and mushy ground in my backyard.

A: These may or may not be signs of a deteriorating septic system. Contact us to discuss these problems



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Mel Simmerman, President
www.Honey-WagonKC.com



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