

PROs And CONs For Septic Bacteria

Septic tanks are becoming increasingly popular in the United States.

That's because building a septic tank is way cheaper than installing a regular sewer system (and equally efficient and sanitary if built and maintained properly).

Thus a septic tank can be regarded as your own personal water sewage treatment system. But is there any special treatment that you should apply in order to prolong its life? And are the septic bacteria a part of this treatment?

Around 25% of total housing in the US and over 33% of newly built residences are using onsite septic systems. The trend is very clear, so you should learn a few things about this issue.

To put it simply, a septic system consists of a large steel or concrete tank buried in your back yard. Usually, a septic tank can hold 4k liters of water or one thousand gallons. Its actual size is determined by the number of people that are using it or the size of the house, obviously. The more, the merrier and the bigger the septic tank must be.

How does a septic tank work? Well, the waste water from your residence enters the septic tank via the sewer pipes from the home at one end of the tank and exits the tank at the other end. Since it drains into the ground, a septic tank requires a relatively large septic drain field.

During transit, the waste water is treated and purified. Most modern septic tanks have two compartments. In the first compartment, the solid matter is allowed to settle at the bottom of the tank while the scum floats. The solid waste is later digested by the anaerobic bacteria in the tank. In the

second chamber, further settlement takes place and the relatively clean water is allowed to escape into the drain field.

Here's where the word "septic" comes into play. Septic refers to the anaerobic bacteria that thrives inside of the tank and plays a crucial role in mineralizing/decomposing the waste that transits and settles at the bottom of the septic system.

How Bacteria Work

The main principle behind septic tanks is the natural bacterial action that decomposes our natural waste products and transforms them into environmentally "friendly" stuff that is later discharged to the onsite drain field.

Obviously, we can assert that without the trillions of naturally occurring bacteria that thrive inside a septic system, there would be no "action" there. These critters play a major part in the process that cleans the waste water in a septic system.

Actually, up to 50% of the sediments inside of a septic system are transformed into gases and liquids, i.e. they're actually eaten, digested and excreted by the septic bacteria that live inside the tank.

Next, you must be aware of the fact that a conventional septic tank is not actually maintenance-free. Even if the bacteria is doing their job with flying colors, sludge (the undigested solid stuff) will start to build on the bottom of the tank and it must be pumped out from time to time. This usually needs done once every 4 years, depending on the size of the tank and the usage.

If not maintained properly, the sludge from inside the tank will leak out in the drain field, thus making it unsanitary.

Besides having your tank pumped regularly, one of the most

important things to take care of in your septic tank is the ecosystem. By that, we mean the bacteria that lives inside must be spared from “ingesting” large amounts of household chemicals such as (non-bio degradable) detergents, bleach, solvents etc.

Basically, you should avoid “feeding” your septic bacteria toxic stuff like solvents (paint thinner), insecticides or anything else that may kill them (including large amounts of grease/cooking fats). If you destroy your good bacteria, your tank won’t drain properly, thus requiring frequent tank pumping which can become expensive quickly.

Pumping your septic system every 3-4 years is absolutely required and recommended by most professionals. There are about 1200 “septic system additives” on the market today and they claim to reduce the frequency of the “costly” pumping if using them as a regular-low cost quick fix.

There are a few things one must know about septic additives or septic bacteria before you dump them down the nearest drain or toilet:

- While they can’t do any harm to your septic system, there is actually no (as in ZERO to my knowledge) scientific proof that they’re actually doing something except for costing you money.
- There are a few [American Court Cases](#) that involve the fraudulent sale of septic tank products that claimed that their products make septic tank pumping completely unnecessary.
- In a properly functioning, well-maintained septic tank, all the bacteria required comes from the human waste itself, given that you don’t use harsh chemicals or lots of anti-bacterial products.

Anyway, even if you choose to buy septic bacteria additives, if you don’t follow the rules i.e. you keep killing the

friendly critters with your harsh chemicals, you'll also kill the "guns for hire" bacteria (that you PAID for).

FASCINATING FACTS

ABOUT

SEPTIC SYSTEMS!

SEPTIC SYSTEM STATISTICS

26.1 MILLION HOUSES IN THE U.S.
RELY ON SEPTIC SYSTEMS AS OF 2007
That's about 20% of all homes



1.54 million ▶



more houses use septic systems than in 1985

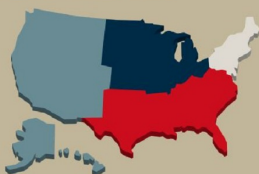
774,000 ▶
houses with septic systems are in central cities (3%)



12.3 million ▶
houses with septic systems are in the suburbs (47%)

13.1 million ▶
houses with septic systems are in rural areas (50%)

SEPTIC SYSTEMS BY REGION



- ▶ 46% of houses with septic systems are in the **South**
- ▶ 22% of houses with septic systems are in the **Midwest**
- ▶ 19% of houses with septic systems are in the **Northeast**
- ▶ 13% of houses with septic systems are in the **West**

THE TRUTH ABOUT SEPTIC SYSTEMS



Myth: You need to "seed" a septic system with bacteria for it to work properly.

False! Just using the septic system provides all the bacteria it needs.



Myth: Additives eliminate the need for pumping the septic tank.

False! Having your tank professionally pumped every 3-5 years is the only way to effectively clean it.



Myth: Septic systems work on their own and don't need maintenance.

False! Ignoring your septic system can lead to expensive repairs down the road.



Myth: Household chemicals will not harm a septic system.

True and false! Small amounts of cleaners will not harm your system—but excessive amounts can harm the organisms that make the system work.



Myth: The grass is always greener over the septic tank.

False! The grass over the drain field is greener because of the moisture and nutrients located there.

Infographic provided by:
A-1 Septic Tank Service



www.liquidwastepumping.com

Sources:

<http://home.howstuffworks.com/home-improvement/plumbing/sewer2.htm>
http://www.epa.gov/osm/septic/septic_systems_factsheet.pdf
<http://www.dinmicksseptic.com/myths-And-Facts.html>
http://adventagesforyou.com/men/septic_Tank_Facts_and_Folklore

How to Make Your Own Bacteria Activator

Even if septic bacteria additives are not scientifically proven to reduce or eliminate the need for pumping your septic tank on regular basis, a freshly pumped septic tank can benefit from a helping hand.

By that, we're referring to seeding a newly-pumped septic tank with the necessary bacteria that will actually start eating the solid stuff in the waste water. Because, after you pump out the tank, most of the beneficial/septic bacteria are also banished.

Hence, it is recommended to add some DIY (Do It Yourself) bacteria activator.

The recipe for a DIY septic bacteria activator:

- 2 packs of active dry yeast
- 4 cups of brown sugar
- 4 cups of hot (but not too hot) water

The mixture should be put inside of a bucket, dissolved/stirred, then left alone for 15-20 minutes (the yeast will react with the sugar and it will get frothy). Once that happens, flush the stuff down your toilet in a few batches instead of all at once. The best time for using the "activator" is at night when everyone is sleeping in order to give the "treatment" time to do its job.

You can use this stuff regularly, once every few months, for "maintenance" purposes, it will cost you next to nothing and it will keep the septic bacteria inside the tank happy and thriving.

Another DIY method for keeping the good bacteria and the enzymes in good shape is to use rotten tomatoes. Yes, you got

that right.

Every 2-3 months, feed your septic tank 3-4 rotten tomatoes via your garbage disposal while the water is running, your septic system will work very well and for extended periods of time. You must make sure that you only pass half a tomato at a time so it breaks up completely into the garbage disposal system.

If you don't have a garbage disposal system, you can just put the rotten tomatoes in a bag, squash them to small chunks and then flush them down the toilet.

To keep your septic tank in good shape, you should keep meat from getting in there via the garbage disposal system; meat doesn't contain beneficial bacteria, either raw or cooked. Also avoid flushing baby wipers, feminine hygiene products, and paper towels and so on and so forth. You should only flush toilet paper and human waste, even if the other "stuff" claims to be "safe" for your septic tank, it actually takes ages to break down.

You should also know that the cleaner the home, the more dead the septic tank is. This doesn't mean that you should stop taking care of your home; au contraire.

All you have to do is avoid using (or minimize the use of) strong cleaning chemicals (bleach-chlorine) and opt out for biodegradable home care and personal hygiene products.

\$300 Survival fortress impervious to hurricanes, bullets and even grenades

Watch the video



*This article has been written by **Chris Black** for [Survivopedia](#).*