Where can I get more information on the location of my septic system?

1. Your municipal building office may have drawings of your house lot showing the location of your septic system.
2. Your local health department may have records of previous replacement or repair permits issued at your address.
3. Your local septic tank pumping company may have information on systems they have serviced.

Your Local Health Department:

Advice about commercial septic tank additives:
The use of additives to help maintain a septic system is not recommended by the CT Department of Public Health. Additives do not extend the amount of time required between septic tank pumping.

Additional Resources can be found at:
EPA SepticSmart
http://www.epa.gov/septicsmart
CT DPH
www.ct.gov/dph/subsurfacesewage

Living Responsibly with a Septic Tank
Homeowner Record-Keeping Folder

If your home is not serviced by a municipal sanitary sewer, it probably has a septic system for disposal of waste water.

What is a Septic System?

A septic system is a means to recycle household wastewater back into the natural environment. Modern systems include a tank, a junction box and a leaching field. In some cases, a pump is also needed.

How A Septic Tank Works

1. Wastewater from your toilet, sink, shower, dishwasher or washing machine drains through your household sewer pipe to the septic tank.
2. Solids lighter than water float to the top of the tank and form a scum layer (fats, oils, hair, soap).
3. Solids heavier than water sink to the bottom of the tank where natural bacteria in the tank breaks them down to form a sludge layer.
4. The liquid waste in between those layers leave the tank to the leaching field, where most contaminants are removed by natural processes if conditions are right.

Additional Resources can be found at:
EPA SepticSmart
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SAFETY HAZARD

Is your tank properly covered?
In Connecticut, beginning on January 1, 2015, a secondary safety lid or device is required for all septic tanks. This device can help prevent a person from falling into a septic tank when the riser cover accidently falls or gets dislodged.

Some items should never be flushed down a toilet or washed down the drain because they may clog the system or kill the microbes that break down organic waste:

Things that clog your system:
• Fats or oils
• Baby / adult wet wipes
• Cat litter
• Feminine hygiene products
• Diapers
• Plastic (including tampon applicators)
• Condoms
• Coffee grounds
• Tissue and/or paper towels
• Cigarette butts
• Anything non-biodegradable

Microbe killers:
• Medication
• Solvents
• Paint
• Poisons

Many commercial products are advertised as “flushable” but that does not mean they are septic safe. Please only flush septic safe toilet paper. Other hygiene products should be disposed of in the trash.

Source: CDC Healthy Housing Reference Manual
“Your septic system is an important part of your home. With proper care and maintenance, it will protect your family’s health and the investment in your home for many years.”

Why is it important to take care of the leaching field?

Your leaching field is where most of the water treatment takes place using natural processes. In a well-functioning conventional septic system, the action of soils and bacteria prevent pathogens and other pollutants from contaminating ground water. The grass planted over a leaching field helps to remove excess water and nutrients. Harmful pathogens die in this underground environment.

• Do not park or drive over your septic system. This will compact the soil and possibly break the pipes under the surface.
• Do not plant trees or water-thirsty plants near your leaching field. The roots may grow into the pipes and clog the system.
• Do not place sheds, swimming pools or other structures over your septic system.
• Direct all water discharges (sump pumps, roof gutters, etc.) away from the leaching field to avoid flooding the system.
• Do not graze livestock over it.

The average septic system should be pumped out and evaluated every 3 – 5 years. More frequent pumping may be required if you routinely use a garbage disposal, have a large family or an undersized tank.

Common causes of septic system failure

• Failing to pump the system routinely.
• Scum and/or sludge can clog the leaching field.
• Clogged septic tank outlet filter.
• Soil compaction over the leaching field.
• Tree roots growing into the piping of the leaching field.
• Overloading your septic system with water all at once.
• Stagger the use of high volume appliances (shower, dishwasher, washing machine) so that water in the leaching field can drain between uses.
• Install water conserving fixtures in bathrooms and kitchens.
• Redirect stormwater runoff away from the septic tank and leaching field.

It is a good idea to have your septic system evaluated during each pump out. Hire a professional do the inspection. Once open, the tank will release dangerous fumes.

• The tank should be visually evaluated for leaks and the depth of the scum and sludge layers.
• If the scum is within 6” of the T-shaped tank outlet, or the sludge layer is within 12” of the outlet, the tank needs to be pumped.
• When the inspection is completed, it is important to properly reinstall the lid and secondary safety lid.
• If a repair to your system is recommended, address this quickly. Contact your local health department for the proper permits.

If your grass is greener over your septic tank, then you may already have a problem.

If a repair to your system is recommended, address this quickly. Contact your local health department for the proper permits.

Preventative Maintenance

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<th>Date</th>
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<th>Company that provided the service</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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Signs that your septic system needs maintenance or has failed:

• Water drains slowly throughout the house’s plumbing system. Call a plumber first to make sure the problem isn’t a clogged waste pipe within your house.
• Sewage backs up into the house, especially on the lower floors.
• A sewage breakout appears over the septic tank or leaching field.
• Soggy soil/lush grass over the drainage area accompanied by a sewage smell.
• After the tank is pumped, water flows back into the tank from the leaching field.
• A water test shows your groundwater well is contaminated with bacteria and/or nutrients associated with human waste.

Septic Tank DOs and DON’Ts

DO get your system pumped every 3 -5 years and record the date on the chart to the left.
DO get a state licensed inspector to inspect your system and provide you with a report to keep in this file.
DO practice water conservation and install low-flow plumbing fixtures.
DO know the location of your tank and leaching field and maintain the area with a mowed, grassy cover.

DON’T park or drive over any of the system components.
DON’T make or allow repairs to your septic system without obtaining the required health department approval.
DON’T clog your system with fats and oils. They can cause some of the most damaging impacts to a functioning septic system.
DON’T poison your system with paints, solvents and medications that kill microorganisms needed to break down waste, and will contaminate groundwater that may be your drinking water supply.
DON’T use your septic system as a trash can by dumping non-biodegradable down your toilet or drains.

Remember: A septic system will operate only as well as it is maintained.