



Home Tips



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Q & A

Septic Tank & Garbage Disposal?

We have always wanted a garbage disposal but were told never to use one if you are on a septic tank. What do you think?

A garbage disposal will not harm your septic system! In fact, it can be an advantage to helping your septic tank function well. Size your septic tank system correctly and maintain it regularly, and your septic disposal will do its job right.

How many homes in the United States do you think rely on a septic system for their household sanitation needs? 5 million you guess? Go higher. 15 million, maybe? Still higher. Try 27 million homes. If we say that there are an average of 3 people in each house, that is nearly 81 million people!



Recent studies indicate that of these 27 million homes, only 22 percent have elected to install a garbage disposal. The 78 percent who do not have garbage disposals choose

not to do it largely because they feel these devices will harm their septic tanks or drain fields.

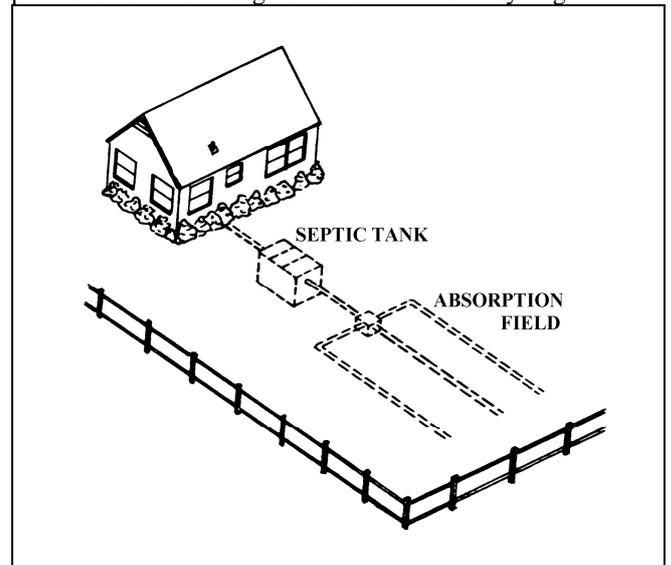
The truth of the matter - as stated by the Federal Housing Authority and other key industry groups such as the Small Flows Clearing House - is that garbage disposals work just fine when coupled with a septic system that has been sized correctly and is maintained on a regular basis.

Displacement

When you send solid particles into a 1,500 gallon capacity septic tank, they begin to accumulate. This accumulation is called sludge. Waste particles that can be broken down by the bacteria within a septic tank can sometimes become sludge if the bacteria doesn't have a chance to attack it.

One of the reasons this can happen is that the particles do not remain in suspension for a long enough period of time. When this happens, the bacteria that break down waste simply do not have enough time to "eat" the waste. As sludge begins to build in a septic tank, it effectively reduces the capacity of the tank and beneficial bacteria.

In our case, let's say that 400 gallons of sludge are in the bottom of the tank. This means we only have 1,100 gallons of bacteria filled water left to attack food and other waste particles. Is it starting to become clear why regular tank



maintenance is important? For the same reason, you should avoid sending solid objects such as cat litter, plastic Star Wars figures, and other objects toward the septic tank.

Additives

You can purchase countless septic tank and system additives. Some of these products are harmful to the biological activity within the septic system. In fact, some additives can rapidly kill the bacteria within the tank. If this happens, you will quickly ruin your entire system as solid particles of waste will be carried to the drainfield. When this happens, it is curtains. The solid particles clog the gravel and soil that surround the perforated drain pipe in the leachfield. Clogged gravel and soil mean the polluted water has nowhere to go but the surface, or it can travel through the soil to contaminate other groundwater resources.

Source: Ask The Builder Tim Carter

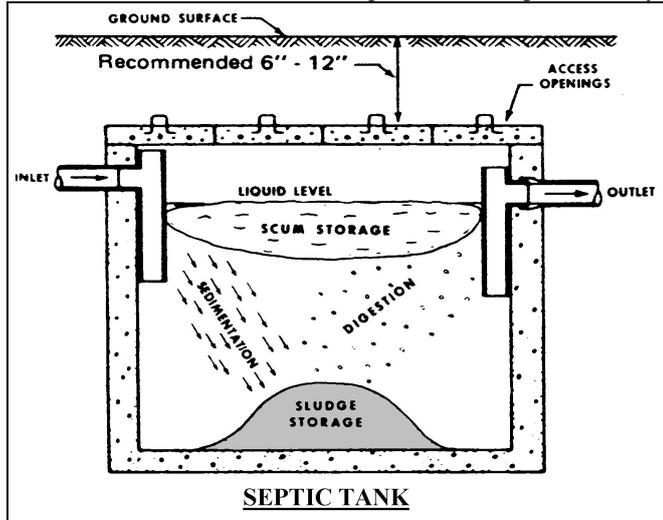
Editor's Note:

According to the Environmental Health Section of the Georgia Department of Human Resources, a septic tank system requires prudent usage and maintenance to insure its best performance. Here are some tips:

1. Only household waste and toilet tissue should be disposed of in a septic tank system. Keep all kitchen greases and hygiene items out of the system.
2. Any leaks that develop in the plumbing fixtures should be immediately corrected. A leaking faucet or toilet tank, no matter how small the leak, will eventually result in complete saturation and failure of the absorption field.
3. A septic tank needs periodic cleaning or pumping out of

the accumulated solids. If the solids are allowed to build up in the tank to a point that they begin to pass out of the tank into the soil absorption network, the soil will soon become clogged with the solids, resulting in failure of the system. If this happens, costly repairs will have to be made before the system will again function properly.

The frequency of tank cleaning or pumping is hard to determine as it depends on many factors and varies with different families. The only sure way to determine the need for service is to open the tank periodically and inspect it to determine the accumulation of solids, but most homeowners will not do this when it is needed. A good rule of thumb would be to have the septic tank pumped out every 3-5 years (we recommend 7). This should provide a margin of safety,



but remember the most accurate way to determine the need for service is to inspect the tank contents on a yearly basis. When you decide to pump out the tank, contact the county health department for a list of sewage removal contractors who have been approved as having the proper equipment to

do the job and an approved site to dispose of this offensive waste.

4. Automobiles and other heavy vehicles should not be allowed over the septic tank system. This causes excessive compaction and actual structural damage to septic tanks and tile absorption field. A sketch of your septic tank system can usually be obtained from your county health department to aid you in knowing the location of all parts of the system. This can be helpful in case of problems with the system or when the tank is cleaned.

5. No presently known chemical, yeast, bacteria, enzyme, or other additive product will improve the operation or life expectancy of a septic tank system.

Quote Of The Month

"Friends are the family we choose for ourselves."

Unknown

A Tip Of The Hat To:

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Thank You

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