

# Homeowner Septic System Guide and Record Folder

Your septic system is a valuable and important component of your home! Understanding and maintaining your system will not only protect your family's health and groundwater, **consistent care of your system will prolong its life and save you money**. This folder provides a place for you to keep important system description information and maintenance records and contacts.

## System Description:

Date of Installation: \_\_\_\_\_

Contractor/Installer: \_\_\_\_\_

Design Flow (gals/day): \_\_\_\_\_

Septic Tank or BAT Unit Volume (gals): \_\_\_\_\_

Septic Tank or BAT Unit Manufacturer: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Tank and Drainfield: \_\_\_\_\_

## System Components:

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Control Panel with Alarms | <input type="checkbox"/> Pump         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distribution Box          | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effluent Filter           |                                       |

## Wastewater Dispersal Type:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gravel Trenches (how many?) _____  | <input type="checkbox"/> Drip Dispersal and Length: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chamber Trenches (how many?) _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Sand Mound                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At Grade Mound                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                     |

**Pumper:** \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Recommended Pumping Frequency (years): \_\_\_\_\_

**Service Provider:** \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_



EBR-2022-0644 | March 2023 | By Andrew Lazur

This document, *Homeowner Septic System Guide and Record Folder* (EBR-2022-0644), is a part of a collection produced by the University of Maryland Extension within the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

The information presented has met UME peer-review standards, including internal and external technical review. For help accessing this or any UME publication contact: [itaccessibility@umd.edu](mailto:itaccessibility@umd.edu). For more information on this and other topics, visit the University of Maryland Extension website at [extension.umd.edu](http://extension.umd.edu)

*University programs, activities, and facilities are available to all without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, age, national origin, political affiliation, physical or mental disability, religion, protected veteran status, genetic information, personal appearance, or any other legally protected class.*

## Recommended Maintenance Practices

- **The most important maintenance is to routinely pump your tank!** Pumping your tank removes the sludge and scum, preventing them from clogging your drainfield. If you own a conventional system, with a standard septic tank, you should pump your tank every three to five years. Contact your local approving authority (which is typically your county health department) for information on certified septic pumpers. If you own a BAT or advanced treatment unit, the pumping procedure and schedule varies among BAT manufacturers. Call your BAT service provider or manufacturer for details.
- **Fix leaking toilets and sinks.** Your system is designed to handle a specific volume of wastewater per day. Leaks can overload it.
- **Use water efficiently and space out showers, laundry, and dishwashing.** This helps to reduce the daily wastewater flow. Do not do more than two loads of laundry at one time if possible.
- **Use green cleaners.** Conventional household chemicals (cleaners, paints, etc.) can kill the beneficial bacteria in your system.
- **Direct rainwater drainage and hot tub water away from the tank and drainfield.** You do not want excessive or standing water on your drainfield. Excessive water can overload capacity for wastewater to percolate into the soil. Standing water can also overload the system and block oxygen from entering drainfield soil. The beneficial bacteria need oxygen to do their job.
- **Don't use a garbage disposal or drain oils.** Undigested food particles require more time to breakdown and increases the sludge volume. Oils and fats add to scum layer reducing wastewater storage capacity of septic tank. Dispose of food waste in trash.
- **Don't flush any products other than toilet paper.** Do not flush adult or baby wipes since they do not decompose and can clog septic tank filters, BAT pumps, and drain fields.
- **Do not drive over, park cars, or build on your septic system or repair area.** This can crush pipes or compact the soil and block oxygen entering soil and can cause water ponding.
- **Don't plant trees within 50 feet of drainfield.** Some trees with shallower roots can be planted 25 feet away. Contact your county Extension office for more information on landscaping septic systems. Tree roots can clog drainfields, causing failures and waste water back up. Shallow-rooted vegetation such as grasses on the drainfield are beneficial in taking up water and nutrients.
- **It is not necessary to add enzymes or bacteria to your system.** Additives do not improve the performance of your system. Regular use of the toilet will result in trillions of beneficial bacteria cells in the tank, which are sufficient to break down wastes. Research has shown that some additives can cause suspension of some solids and organics that may leave the tank and clog the drainfield.
- **Do not discharge water treatment backwash into your septic system.**
- **Continue the BAT service contract for regular inspection and maintenance.** Do not turn off the alarm. Do not turn off the electricity in an attempt to save money—this can greatly reduce the effectiveness of the system and cause solids to clog your drainfield.

## Resources:

UME Well and Septic Education Program: <https://extension.umd.edu/well-and-septic>  
Maryland Onsite Wastewater Professional Association: <https://www.mowpa.org/MOWPA/>