



SEPTIC TANK USE AND CARE: WHY DOES IT MATTER

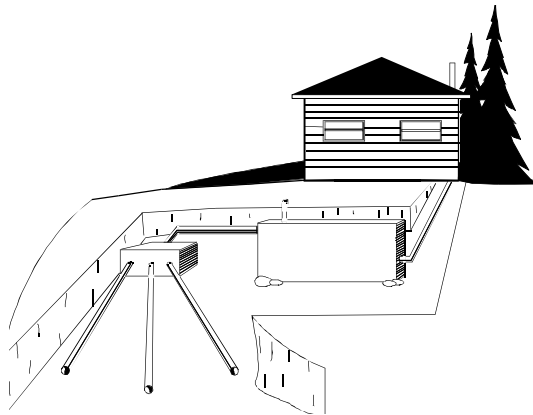
Lesson Guide

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Your Goal As a Teacher

After teaching this lesson, I expect the homemaker / client to:

- Understand the health risk from discharging raw sewage through straight pipes.
- Understand how a septic system works.
- Know how to properly take care of their own septic system.
- Be able to recognize when the septic system is not working properly.



Teaching Tools

- Handout - What is a Septic System & How Does it Work
- Handout - The Do's and Don't of Taking Care of Your Septic System
- Handout -- Your Septic System Isn't Working Right?
- Handout -- Health Effects of Water Pollution
- Video -- Your Septic System: A Guide for Homeowners (11 minutes - available through the Ag. Communications Video Library)
- Video -- Care and Feeding of Your Septic System (16 minutes - available through the Ag. Communications Video Library)
- Flipchart -- Septic System Use and Care: Why Does it Matter? (Available for loan by contacting Kim Henken, (859)257-7775 or khenken@ca.uky.edu.)



Points to Stress

1. Dispose of your waste water (water from flushing toilets, taking showers, or doing the laundry) in the proper way. Do not use straight pipes for sewage disposal.
2. Conserve water -- take shorter showers, turn water off when washing dishes or brushing teeth, fix dripping faucets, wash full loads of garbage, and don't use a garbage disposal.
3. Know where your septic tank and drainfield are located and don't drive over them or build anything on top of them.
4. Have your septic tank cleaned by a pumper every 3-5 years.
5. Don't flush disposable diapers, cigarette butts or tampons down the drain.
6. Don't dump cleaners, cooking oil, grease or mop water down the drain.
7. Don't use store bought chemicals in your septic tank because they don't help it work better.
8. Don't use a garbage disposal.
9. Know how a septic system that is working right functions. The wastes go into the septic tank where the solids settle to the bottom. Bacteria feed on them. The liquid from the tank then flows into a distribution box. The box directs the flow into the drainfield. The drainfield then filters the water slowly.

10. Think about the health effects of polluting the water around you. Hepatitis, diarrhea, worms, parasites are all easy to get from contaminated water.

Ideas for Teaching the Lesson

1. Use the flipchart that is provided and go through it carefully with the homemaker.
2. Show a video or a portion of a video (either one).
3. If the homeowner currently has a straight pipe, go over the handout "Health Effects of Water Pollution" carefully with them. Talk about just what is coming out the straight pipe that empties into the creek near them.
4. Discuss the different ways we can get sick from polluted water. Stress the importance of a septic system that works properly.
5. Have the homeowner show you where the septic tank and drainfield are located. Go over the Your Septic System Isn't Working Right? handout with them.

