



Be LakeSmart

Lakes Environmental Association

Septic System Do's & Don't's



✓ Septic Do's

- ✓ **Pump your tank** on a regular schedule. The general recommendation is every 3 years. Four years may be acceptable for seasonal camps with two primary residents and one week of heavy guest use per year.
- ✓ **Limit the water entering your tank.** Excess water is a major cause of system failure.
 - a. Only flush for solid reasons; toilets are a primary source of water into the tank.
 - b. Fix toilets that run; they can use 25 or more gallons per day or thousands per month.
 - c. Use low flow faucets and shower heads.
 - d. Space out loads of laundry; avoid more than one per day, if feasible.
- ✓ **Remove tree saplings and shrubs from the leach field annually.** Deep-rooted vegetation will intrude into the leach field, shorten its useful life, and compromise its effectiveness.
- ✓ For older systems or those with trees located near the leach field, **have the leach field inspected every five years.** Your service provider can 'scope the system or open up the leach field for inspection.
- ✓ **Take indications of septic system failure seriously, such as:**
 - a. Wastewater backing up into household drains.
 - b. Vegetation over the leach field is noticeably greener and brighter.
 - c. The area around the tank or leach field is wet and spongy, even during dry weather.
 - d. Water pooling near the system.
 - e. You smell strong odors around your system, especially after rainy days.
 - f. Bright green, spongy grass is growing on the leach field, and is especially noticeable during dry weather.

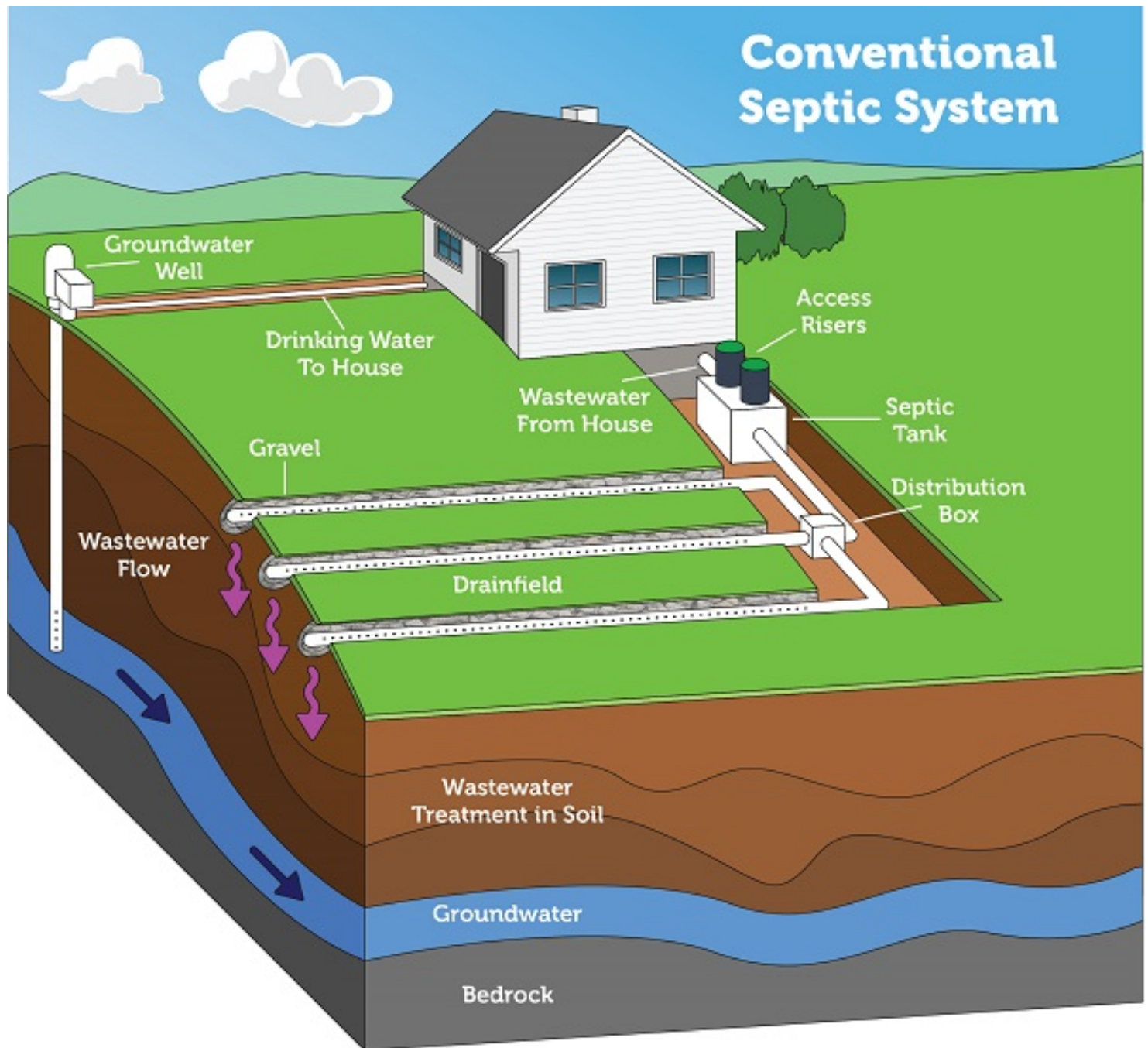
✗ Septic Don't's

- ✗ **Interfere with the septic tank's natural bacterial action** by putting any of the following down the drain or toilet:
 - a. No bleach
 - b. No household cleaners
 - c. No drain cleaners
 - d. No gasoline or motor oil
 - e. No pesticides
 - f. No paint
 - g. No septic system additive (such as Rid-X)
- ✗ **Nothing down the drain or toilet which will not readily break down with bacterial action.**
 - a. No menstrual products
 - b. No diapers
 - c. No paper towels
 - d. No baby wipes (including those advertised as "flushable")
 - e. No dental floss
 - f. No medications
- ✗ **No powdered soaps or detergents.** They contain emulsifiers (which prevent fats from coagulating in the septic tank) and fillers (which clog the pipes in the leach field).
- ✗ **No use of a kitchen garbage disposal.** Using such machines introduces significantly more solids and grease into the tank.

More Information:

Maine Lakes
www.lakes.me/septic
[Caring for Your Septic System \(PDF\)](#)

Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov/septic.



Please note: Septic systems vary. Diagram is not to scale.