

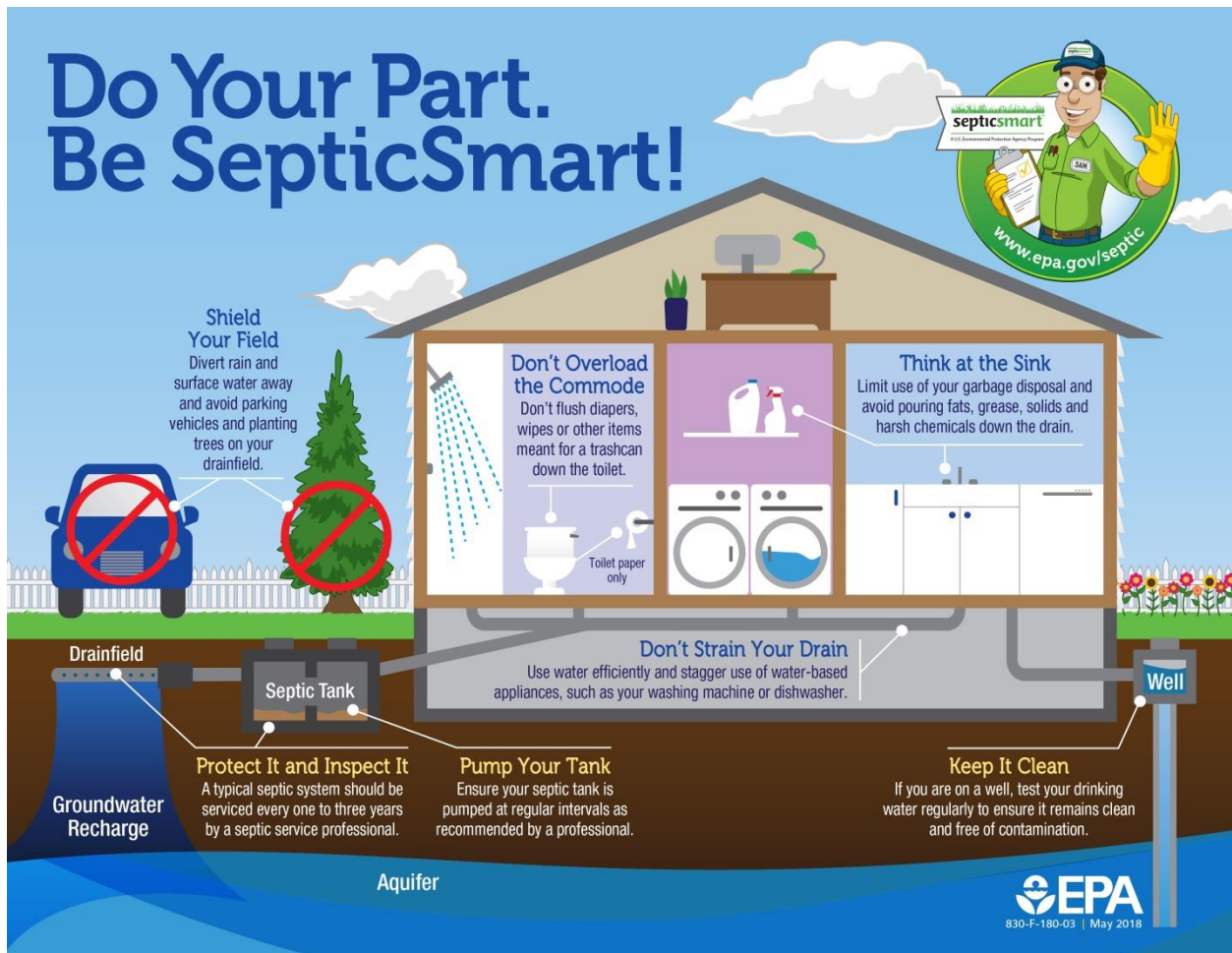


WaterSMART

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EPA Kicks Off Eleventh Annual SepticSmart Week

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is joining state and local partners to launch SepticSmart Week 2023, a week-long annual campaign to educate homeowners and renters on how to properly maintain their septic systems. When septic systems are well-functioning, the health of the nation's communities and ecosystems is better protected. By being SepticSmart, homeowners can also avoid thousands of dollars in unnecessary repairs.

“Everyone plays a role in protecting themselves, their neighbors, and the environment from wastewater contamination,” **said EPA Assistant Administrator for Water, Radhika Fox.** “During the eleventh annual SepticSmart week, I encourage homeowners to learn about EPA’s simple strategies to save money and safeguard communities.

Running from September 18 through September 22 this year, SepticSmart week is a partnership between EPA, state, Tribal, and local officials, wastewater professionals, and homeowners. See below for SepticSmart tips to follow:

1. **Think at the Sink:** What goes down the drain has a big impact on your septic system. Fats, grease, and solids can clog a system’s pipes and drainfield.
2. **Don’t Overload the Commode:** A toilet is not a trash can. Disposable diapers and wipes, feminine hygiene products, coffee grounds, cigarette butts, and cat litter can damage a septic system.
3. **Don’t Strain Your Drain:** Use water efficiently and stagger use of water-based appliances. Too much water use at once can overload a system that hasn’t been pumped recently.
4. **Shield Your Field:** Tree and shrub roots, cars, and livestock can damage your septic drainfield.
5. **Keep It Clean:** Contamination can occur when a septic system leaks due to improper maintenance. Be sure your drinking water is safe to drink by testing it regularly.
6. **Protect It and Inspect It:** Regular septic system maintenance can save homeowners thousands of dollars in repairs and protect public health.
7. **Pump Your Tank:** Ensure your septic tank is pumped at regularly intervals as recommended by a professional and/or local permitting authority.

In addition to the SepticSmart program, resources and support are available for communities that face challenges with their decentralized wastewater systems. Through the [Closing America’s Wastewater Access Gap Community Initiative](#), EPA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture are jointly leveraging technical assistance resources to help disadvantaged communities identify and pursue federal funding opportunities to address their wastewater needs. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law presents a historic opportunity to invest in septic upgrades, community wastewater systems, and sewer connections.

Learn more about [SepticSmart Week](#) and [Decentralized Wastewater Treatment Workforce](#).

Background

More than one-fifth of U.S. households utilize an individual onsite (septic) system or small community cluster septic system to treat their wastewater. These systems treat and dispose of relatively small volumes of wastewater and include a wide range of individual and cluster treatment options to process household and commercial sewage. These systems go by such names as septic, decentralized wastewater treatment, cluster, package plants, on-lot, individual sewage disposal, and private sewage. Onsite systems provide a cost-effective, long-term option for treating wastewater, particularly in sparsely populated areas. When properly installed,

operated, and maintained, these systems help protect public health, preserve valuable water resources, and maintain a community's economic vitality.

For further information: EPA Press Office (press@epa.govwww.nsrwa.org/get-watersmart/septic-systems)