



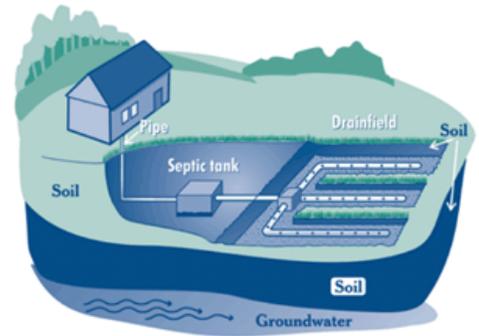
## Understanding Your Septic System: A Homeowner's Guide

### Did you know that:

- As a homeowner you are solely responsible for your septic system and should have it inspected and cleaned regularly?
- A well maintained septic system can provide long-term, effective treatment of household wastewater but that a poorly maintained system could cause thousands of dollars to repair?
- A malfunctioning system can contaminate groundwater that may be a source of drinking water?
- If you buy or sell a home with a septic system an inspection is required?

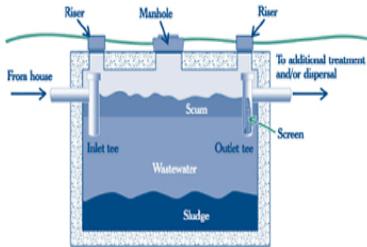
### How Does a Septic System Work?

A typical septic system has four main components: a pipe from the home, a septic tank, a drain field and the soil. Microbes in the soil digest or remove most contaminants from the wastewater before it eventually reaches groundwater



The tank is a buried, watertight container typically made of concrete, fiberglass, or polyethylene. It holds the wastewater long enough to allow solids to settle out (forming sludge) and oil and grease to float to the surface (as scum). It also allows partial decomposition of the solid materials.

Compartments and a T-shaped outlet in the septic tank prevent the sludge and scum from leaving the tank and traveling into the drain field area. Screens are also recommended to keep solids from entering the drain field.



### What Can Make My System Fail?

If the amount of wastewater entering the system is more than the system can handle, the wastewater backs up into the house or yard and creates a health hazard.

By limiting your water use, you can reduce the amount of wastewater your system must treat. When you have your system inspected and pumped as needed, you reduce the chance of system failure.

The most obvious septic system failures are easy to spot. Check for pooling water or muddy soil around your septic system or in your basement. Notice whether your toilet or sink backs up when you flush or do laundry. You might also notice strips of bright green grass over the drain field. Remember; have your septic system inspected by a professional at least every 3 years.

For information on septic systems, please visit the Maricopa County Environmental Services website at <http://www.maricopa.gov/EnvSvc/WaterWaste/OWS/OWS.aspx> or call them at 602-506-6616.

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