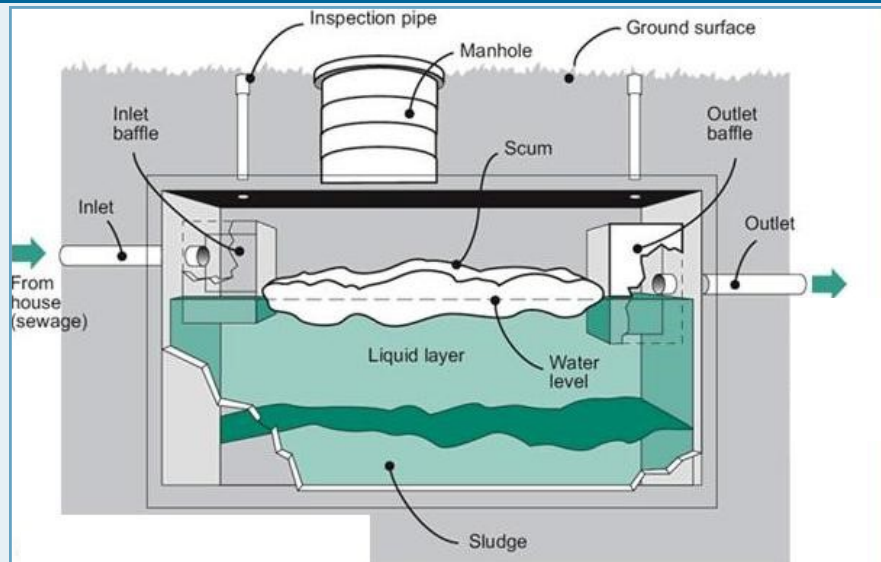


Conventional Septic System

A conventional septic system includes a septic tank and a drainage field.

The tank is a closed container that remains underground, and is usually made of concrete. It separates solid material and floating material from the wastewater. Organic material that floats at the surface of the tank is called the scum layer. Naturally occurring bacteria in the tank will convert this material to a liquid, called effluent. Effluent also includes any liquid waste from the household. The by-products of those bacteria and any solids form a layer on the bottom, called sludge, which is further digested by naturally occurring bacteria.



Conventional Septic Tank— Courtesy of Cape Plumbing, Inc.

The effluent then travels through a T-shaped pipe and enters the subsurface drainfield where there are perforated pipes, also called leach lines. The effluent percolates through the surrounding soil where it will continue to be treated through physical, biological and chemical processes. This process will remove harmful bacteria and viruses from the effluent before it reaches the groundwater. The drainfield is typically located in a part of the yard covered with turfgrass without trees.

Out of Sight, Not Out of Mind

Why should I maintain my septic system?

- **Saving money.** Regular maintenance of your septic system can prevent costly repairs or replacement of a failing septic system. The costs of pumping and inspecting are relatively small compared with very expensive repairs and replacement.
- **Preserving public health.** Having everyone's septic system functioning properly is a matter of public health. Human waste may contain bacteria, viruses, and other pathogens. This waste must be properly treated before the water makes its way to groundwater or surface water bodies. Systems that are not functioning properly could contaminate groundwater, which half of New Jersey's population relies on for their water supply. The contamination of surface waterbodies can lead to disease outbreaks, beach closings, and fish advisories.



Do's & Don'ts

- ✓ DO pump and inspect according to recommended schedule for household size
- ✓ DO use water efficiently
- ✓ DO minimize use of garbage disposal
- ✓ DO keep chemicals out of the system
- ✓ DO plant trees at a safe distance
- ✓ DO place rain drainage systems away from drainfield
- ✓ DO stagger use of water-generating appliances (washing machines, dishwashers, showers, toilets)



- ✗ DO NOT flush feminine hygiene products, condoms, dental floss, diapers, cigarette butts, pharmaceuticals, or cat litter
- ✗ DO NOT dispose of fats, oils and grease down the drain
- ✗ DO NOT park on the drainfield
- ✗ DO NOT drain hot tubs and whirlpools in or on top of the system