SEPTICS — GUIDE

Drain field care for homeowners

Protect the soil treatment area and keep a record of changes.

Updated November 10, 2026

The drain field treats liquid that leaves the septic tank. Protecting that soil treatment area is part of routine septic care. Pumping the tank does not remove the need to protect the field. [US EPA, Types of Septic Systems and How to Care for Your Septic System, accessed 2026-11-10.]

Locate it before changing the yard

Use the approved plan and ask a professional to identify the dispersal area. Keep a copy where a landscaper or contractor can use it. Tell anyone working on the property where the system and access points are.

EPA advises against driving or parking on the drain field. It also advises keeping roof drains, sump pump discharge and other rainwater drainage away from it. Discuss drainage changes with the local authority or system designer instead of moving water toward a neighbour or a well.

Protect the surface

EPA says trees should be planted far enough away to keep roots from damaging the system. Ask a septic professional about suitable planting and spacing for your design. Do not use an invented universal setback.

Do not cover the field with paving or a new structure. EPA explains that impermeable materials reduce evaporation and the supply of oxygen to soil. Ask the local authority before a deck, driveway, shed or landscaping project affects the area.

Control what reaches the system

Spread household water use rather than sending large bursts into the system. Fix plumbing leaks. EPA advises keeping grease, wipes and household chemicals out of drains. A garbage disposal adds solids; tell the service provider if you use one.

Septic additives do not replace maintenance. EPA does not recommend routine additives and warns that they can harm the system or environment.

Watch and record

Look from a safe location for persistent wet spots, odours or wastewater at the surface. Keep people and pets away from sewage. Contact a septic professional if these appear. Record when the change started and whether it follows rain or heavy water use. A site visit is needed to identify the cause.

Keep service reports with the plan. Ask the provider to record the tank condition and the next inspection recommendation, along with any field concerns.

Sources

All sources below were fetched and checked on 2026-11-10. That is the access date, not a claim about publication date.

- US EPA: How to Care for Your Septic System, accessed 2026-11-10.
- US EPA: Frequent Questions on Septic Systems, accessed 2026-11-10.
- US EPA: Types of Septic Systems, accessed 2026-11-10.

Frequently asked questions

Can I park on the drain field?

EPA advises against driving or parking on it. Vehicle weight can compact soil and damage system components.