

Septic System Maintenance Schedule

A one-page reference to keep your system healthy, avoid a five-figure drain-field failure, and prove a maintenance history when you sell.

How often to pump your tank

Estimated years between pump-outs, by tank size and household size. These are planning estimates — pump sooner if solids reach about one-third of the tank, or if an inspection says so.

Tank size	1 person	2 people	3 people	4 people	5 people	6 people
750 gallon	9	4	3	2	1.5	1
1,000 gallon	12	6	4	3	2	2
1,250 gallon	16	8	5	3.5	3	2.5
1,500 gallon	19	9	6	4	3.5	3

Rule of thumb: The EPA recommends most household septic systems be inspected roughly every 3 years and pumped every 3–5 years. A garbage disposal, a home office, or frequent guests shorten these intervals. When in doubt, measure the sludge layer instead of guessing.

Routine care checklist

Every day

- Spread out laundry loads across the week
- Fix running toilets and dripping taps quickly
- Only flush the "3 P's": pee, poop, paper
- Use water-efficient fixtures where you can

Every 1–3 years

- Clean the effluent filter (or at each pump-out)
- Have the tank inspected by a pro
- Measure sludge & scum layers
- Check baffles, lids, and risers for damage

Seasonal & ongoing

- **Protect the drain field:** no driving, parking, or building over it; divert roof and surface water away from it.
- **Landscape smart:** grass over the field is ideal; keep trees and deep roots well clear.
- **Skip the additives:** a healthy tank grows the bacteria it needs — save your money.

Never put these down the drain

- Wipes, paper towels, "flushable" wipes
 - Cooking grease, fats, and oils
 - Coffee grounds and food scraps
 - Cat litter, diapers, cigarette butts
- Paints, solvents, and harsh chemicals
 - Medications and antibacterial cleaners in bulk
 - Dental floss and hygiene products
 - Large volumes of bleach at once

Warning signs — call a professional

Slow drains & gurgling	Multiple slow fixtures or gurgling toilets point to a full tank or a blockage.
Sewage odors	Smells indoors or over the tank/field mean gases are escaping — act promptly.
Wet or lush spots	Soggy ground or unusually green grass over the drain field can signal a failing field.
Backups	Sewage backing into the lowest drains is an emergency — stop water use and call a pro.

Your service log

Keep this filled in. A documented maintenance history reassures buyers and inspectors — and helps you spot a system that's trending toward trouble.

Date	Service performed	Provider	Cost	Next due

A note from the SepticSteward team (Trilot). This schedule is general guidance, not a substitute for a licensed inspection or your local health-department rules, which always take precedence. Save it, print it, and tape it inside a cabinet near your records. More free guides at [SepticSteward.com/guides](https://septicsteward.com/guides).