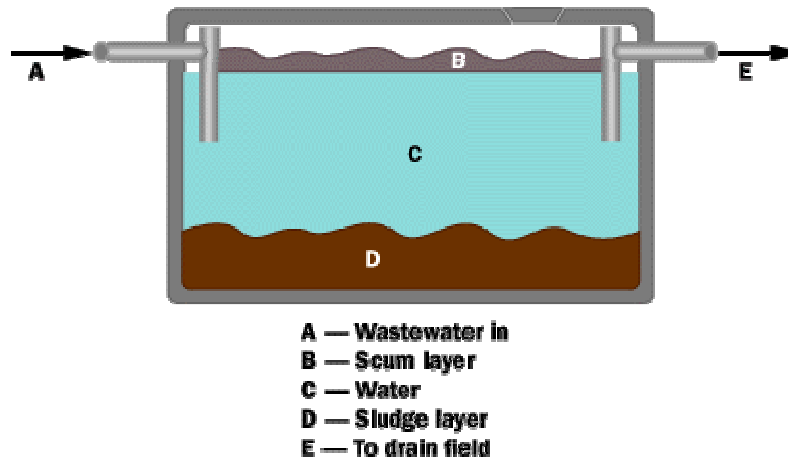


Robyn's Septic Information Series

The Septic Tank

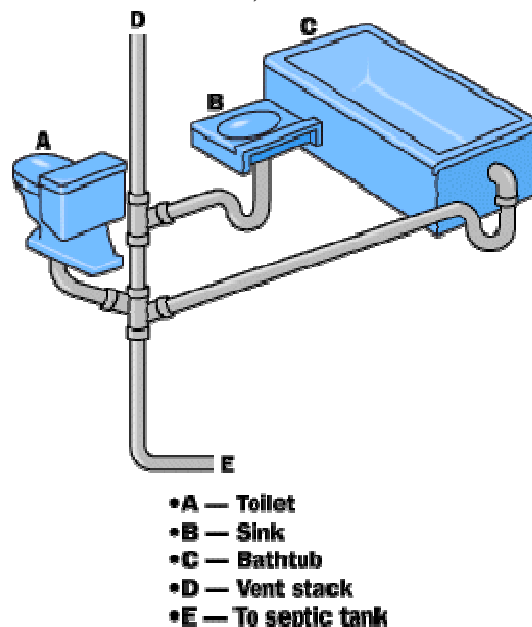
In rural areas where houses are spaced so far apart that a sewer system would be too expensive to install, people install their own, private sewage treatment plants. These are called **septic tanks**.

A septic tank is simply a big concrete or steel tank that is buried in the yard. The tank might hold 1,000 gallons (4,000 liters) of water. Wastewater flows into the tank at one end and leaves the tank at the other. The tank looks something like this in cross-section:



In this picture, you can see three layers. Anything that floats rises to the top and forms a layer known as the **scum layer**. Anything heavier than water sinks to form the **sludge layer**. In the middle is a fairly clear water layer called effluent. This body of water contains bacteria and chemicals like nitrogen and phosphorous that act as fertilizers, but it is largely free of solids.

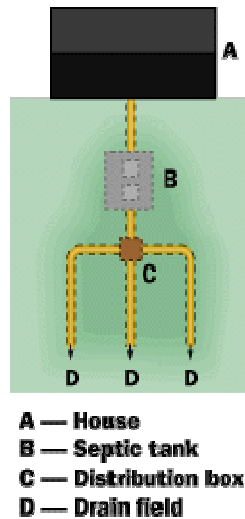
Wastewater comes into the septic tank from the sewer pipes in the house, as shown here:



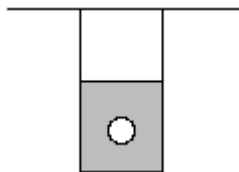
A septic tank naturally produces gases (caused by bacteria breaking down the organic material in the wastewater), and these gases don't smell good. Sinks therefore have loops of pipe called **P-traps** that hold water in the lower loop and block the gases from flowing back into the house. The gases flow up a vent pipe instead -- if you look at the roof of any house, you will see one or more vent pipes poking through.

The Absorption System

As new water enters the tank, it displaces the water that's already there. This water flows out of the septic tank and into a **drain field**. A drain field is made of perforated pipes buried in trenches filled with gravel. The following diagram shows an overhead view of a house, septic tank, distribution box and drain field:



A typical drain field pipe is 4 inches in diameter and is buried in a trench that is 4 to 14 feet deep and 2 feet wide. The gravel fills the bottom 2 to 10 feet of the trench and dirt covers the gravel, like this:



The water is slowly absorbed and filtered by the ground in the drain field. The size of the drain field is determined by how well the ground absorbs water. In places where the ground is hard clay that absorbs water very slowly, the drain field has to be much bigger.

A septic system is normally powered by nothing but gravity. Water flows down from the house to the tank, and down from the tank to the drain field. It is a completely **passive system**.

You may have heard the expression, "The grass is always greener over the septic tank." Actually, it's the drain field, and the grass really is greener -- it takes advantage of the moisture and nutrients in the drain field.

Maintenance

Septic tanks require periodic maintenance, “Pumping” to remove accumulated solids and scum. The frequency of maintenance is usually dictated by household practices but is typically 2-5 years with 3 years being the average interval.

Not all septic service providers offer the same level of service and you should have a basic understanding of your system in order to identify a high quality service.

Things to look for in a maintenance provider:

Service History

How long has your service company been in business, are they in the business for a quick profit or committed to long term service and customer satisfaction?

Training

How well trained is your service provider? If at all!

Equipment

Shiny new trucks, or the right equipment to complete a thorough service?

Commitment

Does your service provider answer the phone when you need them?

Our Company

Robyn's Septic Service acquired Herman Lieske Inc. a 43 year company in 2003. We continue to provide family style service and old fashioned customer care.

Rolfe Garrett, Co-Owner with Robyn Garrett, is one of only 52 NSF Accredited Onsite Wastewater System Inspectors in the entire United States and the only one in the state of Maryland.

Rolfe Garrett is the only National Environmental Health Association Certified Advanced System Installer in Maryland.

Robyn's Septic's service trucks and technicians are fully trained and equipped for any type of system

If you have more questions or would like to schedule a visit to diagnose your condition

Please call us at 410-838-9845

Thanks for choosing *Robyns Septic Service*.



Accredited Onsite System Inspector