

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How Long Does a Septic System Last?

A well maintained system can last as long as 25-35 years, after which the system will need to be replaced or upgraded.

2. How much does it cost to replace a septic system?

Costs to install or replace a septic system depend on the type of system needed:

Type I: \$10,000 to \$20,000

Type II: \$20,000 to \$30,000

Type III: \$30,000 to \$50,000

3. How do I find a Registered Onsite Wastewater Practitioner (ROWP) in my area?

The Onsite Wastewater Consumer Information Centre maintains a list of active ROWPs in BC. Visit <http://owrp.asttbc.org/c/finder.php> and type in your region to find a nearby ROWP.

4. How do I locate my septic tank and drainfield?

Consult your onsite sewage disposal system site plan, as it will show where your tank and drainfield are located. If you don't have a copy of the site plan, Fraser Health be able to provide one to you if your system was installed after 2005. If neither of these options are a possibility, the BC Ministry of Environment has a publication called "How to find a Septic Tank" that may help: www.env.gov.bc.ca/wsd/plan_protect_sustain/groundwater/septic_tank.pdf

5. How do I know when my septic tank needs to be pumped out?

Most households need to have their septic tanks pumped out every 3-5 years. When your tank is pumped, ask the ROWP to measure the scum and sludge layer thickness. The ROWP will then be able to determine the rate that your tank fills up with sludge, and estimate how often it should be pumped.

6. Should I use an additive in my septic tank?

It is not advised that you use additives in your tank. If maintained properly, there should be more than sufficient bacteria in your tank to do the job. Many additives can actually do more harm than good, by destroying beneficial bacteria and corroding concrete tanks and distribution boxes as well as degrading the soil structure in your drainfield.

A common old wives tale is that a piece of rotten liver placed in the septic tank will help with bacteria growth. This will neither do harm nor good to your system. As long as you take proper care of your system, it should not need extra "help" with enzymes or bacteria.

7. What can I plant on top of my drainfield?

The best thing to plant on top of your drainfield is grass, as it holds the soil and has shallow roots. Shallow rooted native plants or wildflower meadow plants may be suitable, as they do not require much watering or maintenance. Edible plants, such as fruit or vegetables should not be planted over the drainfield.