

## Landscape your property wisely

Do not place tannin or tan bark over the lids or inspections points to your system, ideally leave them clear and easily accessible. Don't water the garden or wash the car near the absorption trench.

Small shrubs and plants may be grown over the absorption or sand filter area but root systems from large trees can crack pipes and should be avoided.

The following species are suitable for growing over absorption trenches:

- Cannas
- Zenobia
- Leycesteria
- Dwarf salvia
- Bonfire salvia
- Japanese anemones
- N.Z. Flax
- Sprengelia
- Hosta
- Baura sessiliflora
- Hembrocallis
- Melaluca gibbosa
- Heleniums
- Japanese irises
- Almia angustifolia

## Plan carefully

Septic tanks and disposal systems should be located in garden, lawn, and vegetated areas and be kept clear of :

- Vehicles, driveways and car parks
- Paved, sealed or gravel surfaces
- Areas subject to long periods of shade, inundation or stormwater run-off
- Stormwater systems
- Underground service pipes for gas, electricity, phone, water and drainage
- Swimming pools
- Tennis courts
- Buildings, decking, garages and carports
- Livestock
- Fruit and vegetables for human consumption
- Water bores

## DON'T

**Turn off treatment systems when not at the property if it is not a primary residence.**

This can damage pumps and lead to costly repairs and failing systems. Alarms installed on system panels will also not activate as designed.

**Install garbage disposal units in kitchens, they can disrupt bacteria vital to breaking down effluent**

## What are some warning signs about the health of my system?

Your septic may need attention if:

- A rotten egg smell is present.
- The ground is damp or soggy around absorption trenches.
- The toilet, shower or drains are slow to clear.

## What are common causes of septic system problems?

### The tank contains too much scum and sludge

Solid scum and sludge form at the top and the bottom of the tank as the effluent passes through. If the tank doesn't get pumped out, wastewater with solids will flow out of the tank and cause problems with your absorption trenches, pumps or sand filters.

#### Solution:

Desludge your system every three years, more frequently if there is heavier usage.

### Overloading the system with water

Too much water causes the wastewater to flow too quickly through the tank before the bacteria have a chance to break it down.

This can result in clogging of absorption trenches due to solids being pushed through the system. This is common in holiday homes, where the system is not used for most of the year and then overloaded during the peak holiday season.

#### Solution:

Use less water, install water efficient fixtures.

# Septic Health The Facts



We thank you for helping us all to manage and maintain systems together, to protect and ensure the distinctive and beautiful character of the Peninsula. For comment or further enquires please contact the Shire's Environmental Health Team at

#### Contact us

T: 5950 1050

T: 1300 850 600

E: [septics@mornpen.vic.gov.au](mailto:septics@mornpen.vic.gov.au)

[mornpen.vic.gov.au/Your-Property/Environment/Drainage-Water/Septic-Tank-Systems](http://mornpen.vic.gov.au/Your-Property/Environment/Drainage-Water/Septic-Tank-Systems)



Domestic wastewater disposal is one of the most important environmental issues on the Mornington Peninsula. There are more than 30,000 properties across the Peninsula without reticulated sewerage, and all of these properties rely on septic tank systems to dispose of their wastewater safely.

#### Contact us

T: 5950 1050

T: 1300 850 600

E: [septics@mornpen.vic.gov.au](mailto:septics@mornpen.vic.gov.au)

## Do I have a septic tank system?

On the Mornington Peninsula there are many un-sewered rural, residential and commercial areas. When considering the purchase of land within the Shire you should contact South East Water on 131 694 to find out if a sewer network is available. It is the responsibility of the property owner to find out whether the property is seweraged or on a septic tank system. In areas where there is no sewer, an approved, suitably designed septic tank system must be installed and maintained in accordance with the Shire's permit conditions.

## Do I need a septic tank system?

The Shire requires that all proposed residential developments connect to the available sewer network unless a wastewater re-use system has been or will be installed that meets the Environment Protection Authority's sustainable re-use guidelines (EPA Publication 891.4) To confirm if your property is in an area with a sewer network contact South East Water at [www.betterconnected.com.au](http://www.betterconnected.com.au)

In areas where there is no sewer an approved septic tank system must be installed and maintained in accordance with the Shire's permitting conditions.

## How does a septic tank system work?

When you flush the toilet, have a shower or wash the dishes where does the water go? After doing these activities the water is dirty and needs to be treated. The water runs from these fixtures through pipes into a septic tank. Your septic tank is a living ecosystem where bacteria break down and digest the waste within the dirty water. The wastewater from a septic tank, treatment plant or sand filter is then disposed of on each property usually within an allotted drainage field. For further information regarding the function of septic systems we recommend you contact our Environmental Health Team who can direct you to comprehensive, educational tools.

## How do I apply to install a septic system?

All parts of a wastewater disposal system including the tank, treatment plant, absorption drains and irrigation must be approved by the Environment Protection Authority. A list of these systems approved for use can be found at [www.epa.vic.gov.au](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au) A 'Permit to Install' must be obtained from the Shire before commencing construction or altering an existing system. The 'Permit to Install' does not allow the septic tank system to be used. The Shire must inspect the system during installation to ensure that it has been installed correctly and complies with the specific Code of Practice, they will then issue a 'Permit to Use'. Please be aware that the processing of the 'Permit to Install' or 'Permit to Use' applications may take up to 15 days. Further information and documentation on the permit process can be found at the Shire's website.

## How do I maintain my septic system?

Attention to the care and maintenance of your septic system can prevent problems and save on costly repairs and early replacement. You should know the location of the system on your property and at least once a year take the time to consider the health of that system, especially if you do not have a service agreement in place with a contractor or agent. Outlined here are the different types of septic systems and their maintenance requirements. Your obligations as the property owner will also be stated on your permit conditions.

### Septic Tank

- **Service tank every three years**
- **Desludge every three years (if required)**

### Sand Filter

- **Annual service/check**
- **Desludge every three years**
- **Replace sand filter every fifteen years (if required)**

### Mechanical Treatment Plant

- **Quarterly service by approved service agent**
- **Desludge every three years (if required)**

### Worm Farm

- **Service at six and eighteen months following installation then every two years thereafter.**
- **Desludge every three years (if required)**

Desludging involves pumping your solid waste out of the septic tank to maintain a healthy system. You must have a licenced contractor carry out this work because septic waste is toxic to human health.

Each year the Shire routinely inspects, regulates and monitors the installation, operation and maintenance of systems and reports wastewater management issues to the Environment Protection Authority. Records of maintenance of your septic system should be forwarded to [septics@mornpen.vic.gov.au](mailto:septics@mornpen.vic.gov.au) to demonstrate that you have a compliant, healthy septic system. For further information, queries or concerns please contact our Environmental Health Team.

## Some helpful hints – Do's and Don't's

### DO

**Have your system regularly maintained by a professional.**

**If you can get a service agreement in place to prompt you, this is a great idea.**

**Switch to bio-degradable or natural cleaners if possible**

Chemicals like paints, solvents, oils, disinfectants, bleaches and pesticides can kill the helpful bacteria in your septic system. The bacteria help breakdown the effluent. The loss of bacteria stops it digesting effluent. Bicarbonate of soda and white vinegar are good alternatives or products that are compatible with septic systems.

**Be careful what you flush, wash or spray**

Most people know that many non biodegradable products including sanitary napkins and tampons, 'flushable' wipes, cooking oils and saturates cannot be managed effectively by septic systems but there are many other products which should also only ever be disposed of in bins provided.

Rethink these household items entering your septic system:

- food scraps suitable for compost
- caffeine
- some medications
- hair and dental floss
- tissues
- cat litter
- nappy sanitisers



**If you unsure, ask; the Shire's Environmental Health Team are here to help you.**