

Help protect your health and the environment

Do's and Dont's

Poorly maintained septic systems are a serious source of water pollution, may present health risks and cause odour and vermin problems.

By looking after your septic system you can do your part in helping to protect the environment and the health of your family.

Management of the treated water from your septic system is your responsibility.

WARNING SIGNS

You can look for the following warning signs that signal there are troubles with your septic system

- Water that drains too slowly
- Drain pipes that gurgle when air bubbles are forced back through the system
- Sewage smells
- Water backing up to your sink
- Waste water surfacing / pooling in the yard.
- Collapsed or sunken drainage trenches

Immediate attention will protect your health, the environment and ultimately save you money.

- Do** Grow suitable plants over the drainage field
Contact Shire Office for advice.
- Do** Have the septic pumped out (desludged) every three years
- Do** Keep records of inspections and maintenance
- Do** Practice water conservation
- Do** Repair leaking taps and toilets immediately
- Don't** Use bleaches and cleaning products excessively
- Don't** Allow oil or grease to enter the system
- Don't** Allow storm water to discharge into a septic system or over a drainage field
- Don't** Cover the drainage field with paving concrete or buildings or other structures.
- Don't** Place non-biodegradable objects into the system

Questions? Our friendly staff look forward to helping you.

Colac Otway Shire Council

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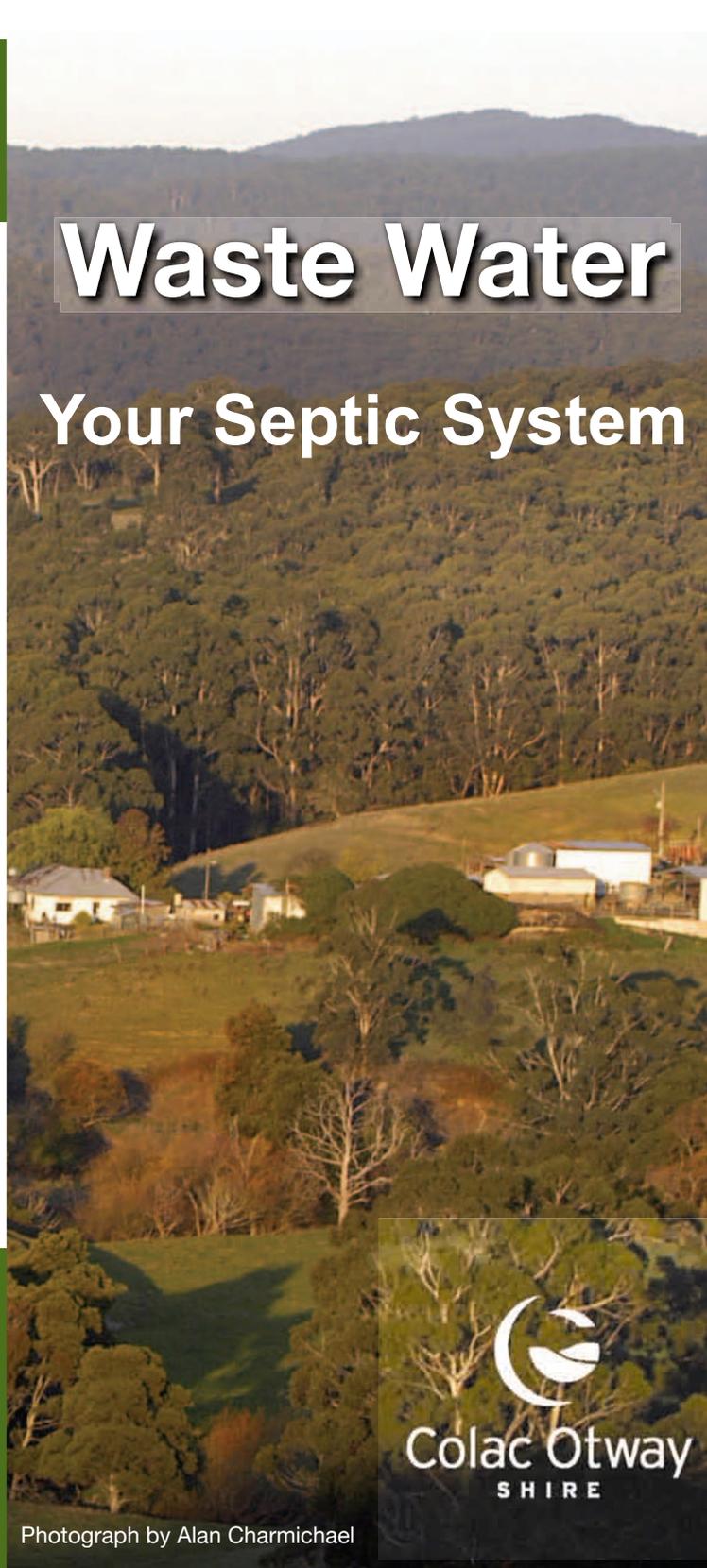
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Waste Water

Your Septic System




Colac Otway
SHIRE

Photograph by Alan Charmichael

Your Septic System

System Breakdown

Keeping your Septic System Operating Properly

The proper treatment and re-use of household wastewater is critical in minimizing its impact on public and environmental health. Septic systems have been developed as a way of achieving this.

What is a septic system?

A septic system consists of a septic tank and a series of soil absorption trenches or transpiration trenches. The system enables people in unsewered areas to treat and disperse their waste water to land.

How does a septic system work

All the waste water from the household enters the tank. The solids settle to the bottom and are retained in the tank forming a sludge layer, whilst fats and greases collect at the top in a scum layer.

Bacteria in the septic tank break down the solids in the sludge and scum layers. Material that cannot be fully broken down gradually builds up in the tank and must be pumped out.

Treated fluid flows from the tank to the effluent trenches where it is absorbed into the ground and used by plants.

Septic tanks are not recommended in sensitive locations, high porosity soils or high density developments where they can contaminate the soil and/or groundwater.

The breakdown of an all-waste system can be caused by many factors. It is often difficult to isolate any single common factor since design faults, misuse and lack of maintenance are known to be significant contributors to the failure of systems. The Golden Rule: 'prevention is both better and cheaper than cure' applies here. The following are some guidelines:—

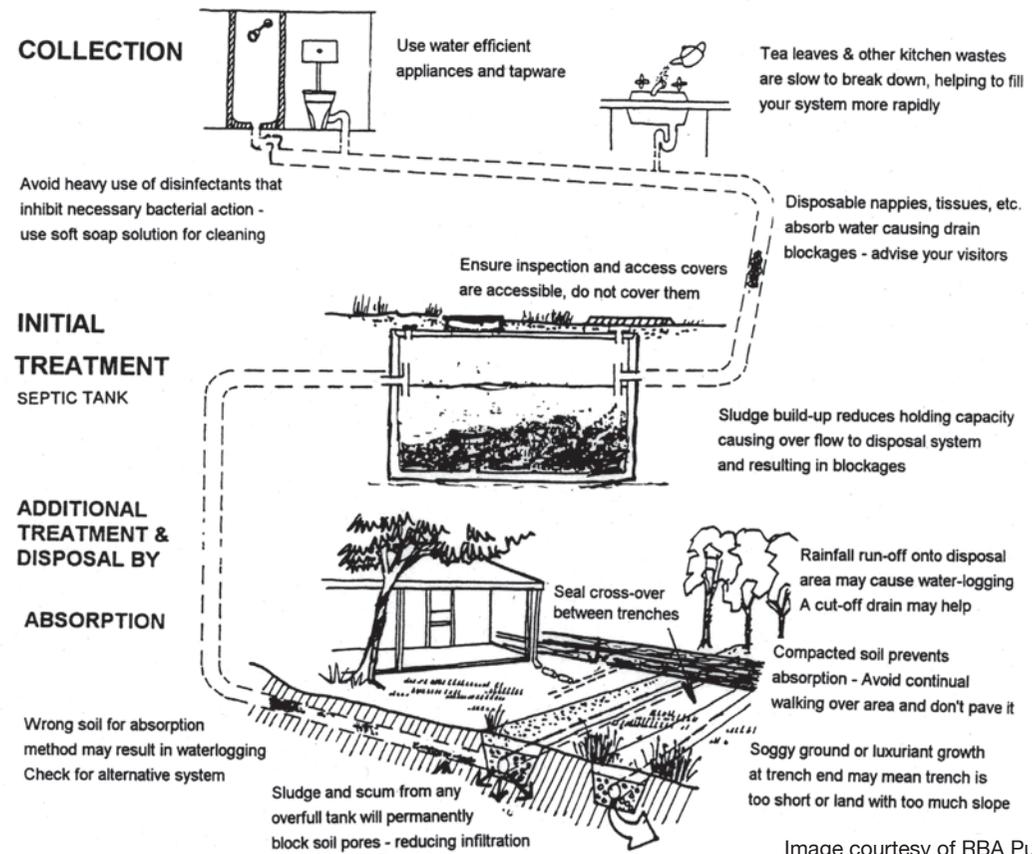


Image courtesy of RBA Pub. 451

Managing Water Use

Reducing water usage will lessen the likelihood of problems such as overloading your septic system. Overloading may result in wastewater discharging above ground, contaminating your yard, nearby watercourse or a dam with improperly treated effluent.

Your septic system is also not able to cope with large volumes of water such as several showers, or loads of washing over a short period of time. You should try to avoid these "shock loads" by ensuring ensuring water use is spread more evenly throughout the day and week.