

Practice Water Conservation to Lengthen Septic System Life

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Conserving water to reduce the amount of wastewater that needs to be treated and distributing water flow to the septic tank over an extended period of time, will extend the life of a system.

Wastewater should remain in the septic tank long enough, at least 24 hours, for heavy solids to settle out, forming sludge and light solids to float to the top, forming scum. Except immediately after pumping, a septic tank contains wastewater to its full capacity at all times. As a gallon of wastewater flows into the tank from the house, a gallon of effluent flows out of the tank into the drainfield.

If wastewater moves in and out of the tank too rapidly due to constant flow for extended periods of time or heavy water flow at any given time, solids remain suspended in the wastewater and may move with the effluent out of the tank and into the drainfield. Solids can clog a drainfield, decreasing its ability to treat wastewater. This can lead to costly repairs

or even replacement.

Conserve water and spread out water usage by following these suggestions:

- Wash one or two loads of laundry a day, rather than three or more loads in one day.
- Install low-flow water fixtures, low-volume toilets and low-water-use appliances when they need replacing.
- Check for and repair leaky faucets, toilets and other leaks in the plumbing system. Leaks can account for almost 15 percent of all wastewater that goes into a septic system.
- Take short showers.
- Turn off the faucet while brushing teeth or shaving.

If purchasing a water softening unit, select one with demand-initiated regeneration. These types of units automatically determine when to regenerate by keeping track of the number of gallons of water used by measuring the change in the electrical conductivity of the resin bed or by sensing a change in water hardness. These regenerate and use water based on when the system needs it, rather than on a set time schedule. Most people find that a demand-initiated system regenerates less frequently than one with a timer.

Control of Biting Flies



Stable fly — life cycle of a fly consists of egg (left), larva (top), pupa (right) and adult (bottom)

Horse fly

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Many of the biting flies, like black flies, horse flies and deer flies breed in water or in mucky areas near ponds and swamps. Consequently, it is very difficult for individuals to attempt control of these biting flies by reducing breeding sites. Stable flies breed in decaying grass or crop clippings, hay residues and silage. Because they are extremely strong fliers, the source of the infestation may be located up to several hundred miles away. Therefore, stable flies usually cannot be controlled by individuals.

Many biting flies are active at certain times. Avoid outdoor activity during these peak biting times. Horse flies, deer flies, black flies and stable flies are usually most active during the day. Most of the biting flies are also most active at certain times of the year. Deer flies and black flies are most prevalent in early to late spring. Stable flies are most abundant in late August through October or November.

If it is necessary to go outdoors into areas where biting flies are prevalent, wear protective clothing. Long sleeved shirts, long pants will protect arms, legs and head from bites. If necessary, apply a repellent labeled for biting fly protection. Apply products according to label directions. Reapply as needed and as recommended on the label. Most repellents do not work as well for biting flies as they do for mosquitoes; therefore, they have to be reapplied more often.

Most biting flies bite in still air. Increasing air movement in porches, patios and picnic areas will keep biting flies away, but will not usually provide complete protection. Burning candles, coils and torches containing citronella or other biting fly repellent will sometimes help reduce bites. Burning these items produces a smoke which repels biting insects. Most biting flies will usually rest on low vegetation until they detect a host. Pruning shrubs, mowing weedy areas and opening up the environment for air flow will reduce numbers of biting flies in an area.

Despite all efforts, biting flies may still be a problem. If biting flies get inside the house, space sprays can be applied to kill them. Remove all people and pets from rooms, turn off air handling systems, apply the product according to label directions and wait about 10-15 minutes before aerating the room. Keep room vacant as long as the label recommends.

Crack and crevice treatments can be used to treat areas where biting flies enter the house. Areas to be treated would include cracks around doors and windows.

Biting flies usually rest on vegetation or the sides of houses before entering or before biting people. Numbers of biting flies around houses can be reduced by applying outdoor barrier treatments to places flies would contact before biting or entering the house. Be sure to apply all products according to label directions and to locations listed on the label.

Don't Mistake Blossom End Rot for Mold on Tomatoes



Blossom End Rot on tomatoes

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Late spring and early summer are common times for garden plants, such as tomatoes and peppers, to develop signs of blossom end rot. As a result, gardeners should be cautious not to overlook sunken, blackened areas of mold because they may be indicators of a more serious problem.

Blossom end rot is a physiological disorder caused by calcium deficiencies in plants. The signs of the disorder commonly occur on the first fruits of each growing season. Irregular, sunken black spots will

appear near the plant blossom and often lead to fruit that is mushy and flat. Blossom end rot may eventually destroy the entire fruit. Once it has established itself, it cannot be treated.

Blossom end rot is not a mold itself. However, it can contribute to the growth of mold on fruit. In the presence of moisture, mold will grow near a lesion where blossom end rot has already weakened a plant.

To prevent blossom end rot, it is important to prevent the tie-up of calcium in the soil. Providing a consistent moisture supply and maintaining pH levels from 6.5 to 7 are good methods of ensuring the plant will receive enough calcium and other important nutrients.

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