Proper Landscaping On and Around Your Septic System

The drainfield is a vital part of your septic system. Having the right landscaping on and around your system is important, as tree and shrubbery roots can grow into the drain lines. Also, other heavy items like cars and livestock can break drain lines. Strong roots and heavy items can cause the drainfield to fail. And if the drainfield fails, your system fails.

Here are some tips to keep your drainfield out of harm’s way.

Locate your septic tank and drainfield.
Then make sure the area is clear of:
- Underground sprinkler lines
- Driveways
- Vehicles
- Heavy equipment & materials
- Storage sheds
- Decks and patios
- Swing sets
- Sand boxes
- Sports courts
- Swimming pools

Plant drought-tolerant plants.
These are some of the best for your septic system and its drainfield:

Grass for sun:
- Fescue (Festuca ovina)
- Lawn
- Ornamental grasses (not Pampas)
- Wildflower meadow mixes

Groundcovers for sun:
- Bugleweed (Ajuga)
- Carpet heathers (Calluna vulgaris)
- Kinnikinnick (Arctostaphylos uva-ursi)
- Salal (Gaultheria procumbens)

Groundcovers for shade:
- Bishop’s Hat (Epimedium)
- Bunchberry (Cornus canadensis)
- Ferns
- Japanese spurge (Pachysandra)
- Mosses
- Salal (Gaultheria procumbens)
- Sweet woodruff (Galium odoratum)
- Wild ginger (Asarum)

Use natural yard care practices.
To learn more, visit: www.naturalyard.surfacewater.info

Follow Septic Sam’s landscaping do’s and don’ts:

Don’t:
- Plant a vegetable garden on or near the drainfield.
- Put plastic sheets, bark, gravel or other fill over the drainfield.
- Reshape or fill the ground surface over the drainfield and reserve area. However, just adding topsoil is generally OK if it isn’t more than a couple of inches.
- Make ponds on or near the septic system and the reserve area.

Do:
- Plant grass or keep existing native vegetation. These are the best covers for your drainfield.
- Direct all surface drainage away from the septic system.
- Use shallow-rooted plants (see plant list above). Tree and shrub roots can grow into the drainlines, clogging and breaking them.
- Avoid water-loving plants and trees.
- Make sure the tank lid is secure.

For more SepticSmart tips, visit www.epa.gov/septicsmart