BUILD A PATIO, SHED, DRIVEWAY, ETC. ON TOP

PULL OUT TREE STUMPS, ROTOTILL OR DIG (CUT TREES AT GROUND LEVEL OR GRIND INSTEAD)

PLANT A VEGETABLE GARDEN

PLANT TREES OR SHRUBS ON OR NEARBY

PUT A ROCKERY ON TOP OR NEARBY

TERRACE WITHIN 50FT ON SLOPING SITES

INSTALL A SPRINKLER SYSTEM IN OR NEARBY

INSTALL AN ARTIFICIAL POND IN OR NEARBY

PUT A FIREPIT ON TOP

LANDSCAPING

FOR SEPTIC SYSTEMS

PROTECTING YOUR DRAINFIELD

The drainfield is a critical component of your septic system. If your drainfield gets damaged, it won't be able to treat wastewater from your home like it should, and that's why it's important to protect it. Keep your drainfield in good shape with these landscaping dos and don'ts:

**Drainfield Dos**
- Learn where your system is located
- Only plant grass or recommended plants
- Walk your drainfield to check for issues
- Direct water away from the drainfield
- Use barriers to prevent unwanted traffic
- Only use landscape fabric that's breathable
- Keep off heavy equipment and livestock
- If you build a fence around your drainfield, make sure it allows light to pass through
- Keep the shape and slope of the surface

**Drainfield Don'ts**
- Build a patio, shed, driveway, etc. on top
- Pull out tree stumps, rototill or dig (cut trees at ground level or grind instead)
- Plant a vegetable garden
- Plant trees or shrubs on or nearby
- Put a rockery on top or nearby
- Terrace within 50ft on sloping sites
- Install a sprinkler system in or nearby
- Install an artificial pond in or nearby
- Put a firepit on top

Can I Just Leave My Drainfield Blank?

Sand, bark, wood chips, gravel, or plain dirt over your drainfield may sound easy, but these materials keep oxygen from getting into the ground, and bare soil can start to wash away. Plants help with oxygen exchange, keep soil healthy, and hold dirt in place so your drainfield can do its job.

What About Near My Septic Tank or Pump Tank?

**Risers** | If you don’t already have risers, installing them is a great idea. They allow for easy access to tanks during routine inspections and pumping.

**Plants and Ground Covers** | Things like bark, wood chips, and gravel are okay here. Wastewater is not treated in the soil next to tanks so there isn’t a need for plants. All the other advice still applies though. Don’t put anything heavy over this area. If you do plant something, stick to shallow-rooted plants to avoid damage to tanks and pipes.

What About Those Other Lids in My Yard?

Some septic systems have lids out in the drainfield. These are access ports that allow for easy inspection of the drainfield. Make sure that your landscaping doesn’t bury or hide them.

What About My Reserve Area?

Protect this the same way as your drainfield. If you do things to damage the soil in your reserve area, it may not be useable in the future for a replacement drainfield if your current one fails.

Visit our website for more information about septic systems

SNOHOMISH COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

SNOHD.ORG/SEPTIC  SHD-EHQ@SNOCO.ORG  425-339-5250
LANDSCAPING
FOR SEPTIC SYSTEMS

KNOW WHERE YOUR SYSTEM IS LOCATED

One of the most important things to know when landscaping is where your septic system is. It helps you know what to avoid when landscaping or doing other projects. If you don’t know where your system is, you can find out using OnlineRME. Visit Snohd.org/159/As-Built-Records to find your records. Don’t see them there? Your system might be too old or installed before records were required. If this is the case, you can hire a septic professional to help figure out where your system is or submit a records request with the Health Department to see if there are additional records available for your property.

PLANTING TIPS

Grass is the #1 choice! Why? Because it provides year-round coverage, has shallow roots, and allows oxygen and water to move easily through the soil. If you choose plants other than grass over your drainfield, keep these traits in mind:

Shallow Rooted | Roots can clog holes, break pipes, and cause lots of damage. Some systems can be buried as shallow as six inches underground, so it’s important to pick plants that have shallow roots.

Year-Round Coverage | Year-round coverage will prevent runoff of the topsoil above your drainfield, and it will keep the microbes in the soil happy by making sure oxygen gets into the ground all year long.

Drought Resistance | Drought-resistant plants can be good for your drainfield because they need little water. However, some drought-tolerant plants can handle dry spells because of long, wide-spread roots that reach way down where water is present (which would be your drainlines!) and could cause damage. If a plant is drought resistant, make sure it still has shallow roots.

Native Plants | Native plants are accustomed to our climate and require less maintenance. They’ll need less watering which will save your drainfield the added stress from extra water.

For more recommendations on plant types, contact a nursery professional.

Grasses for Sun
- Fescue
- Lawn
- Ornamental grasses
- Wildflower meadow mixes

Ground Covers for Sun
- Bugleweed
- Carpet heathers
- Kinnikinnick
- Cotoneaster
- Thyme
- Stonecrop
- Soapwart

Plants for Shade
- Bishop’s hat
- Bunchberry
- Ferns
- Mosses
- Salal
- Sweet woodruff
- Wild ginger
- Wintergreen
- Japanese spurge

Visit our website for more information about septic systems
SNOHD.ORG/SEPTIC SHD-EHQ@SNOCO.ORG 425-339-5250