



Maintaining Your Septic Systems

The Village of Sparta residents are connected to a municipal sewer system treatment plant. However, residents outside the village limits or not connected to a municipal sewer system use a septic system. These private septic systems can affect the ground water outside your property, however, as groundwater can carry harmful toxins and debris into municipal and private water sources and the major water sources such as the Grand River.

Does your septic tank need to be inspected or pumped out? if so, give a reputable septic tank pumping firm a call this spring. To prolong the life of your system, follow these tips from MSU Extension.

Pump your septic tank regularly, usually once every three to five years to avoid a costly septic system failure. Signs of failure include: odors, plumbing or septic tank backups, and gurgling sounds in the pumping system.

Stay away from additives. Their benefits have not been demonstrated, and some may actually harm your system and contaminate groundwater.

Rain Gardens

A rain garden is a special kind of garden. It is typically planted with native wildflowers, grasses, and shrubs. It has a shallow dip at the center to collect, filter, and soak up rainwater running off the land, roof tops, and pavement. A rain garden will naturally trap nutrients, and other pollutants, and clean up dirty rainwater.

What are the Benefits?

- Native plants naturally need less water, fertilizers, and pesticides saving you time and money.
- Rain Gardens attract birds and butterflies to your yard.
- Rain gardens keep dirty rainwater from entering the storm sewer system and the Grand River.



How to I plant a Rain Garden?

1. Select a spot in your yard to capture rainwater.
2. Use a shovel to create a shallow dip.
3. Replace soil if needed. A good mix is 50-60% sand, 20-30% topsoil, and 20-30% compost.
4. Plant native plants (ex. butterfly weed, purple cone flower, prairie drop seed, or multicolored iris).
5. Mulch with shredded hardwood and water
6. Visit raingardens.org for more information.

New Michigan Law Restricts Phosphorus Fertilizers: Use Phosphorus-free Fertilizer

Protecting the Water Quality

Phosphorus is a naturally occurring essential nutrient for plants and animal growth. It is also a primary water quality concern in Michigan. When excess phosphorus is applied on land, it may run into nearby lakes, rivers, and streams. This runoff can lead to increased algae and aquatic plant growth which can have negative effects on water quality, fisheries, recreation, and property values. By restricting unnecessary phosphorus applications, the phosphorus law will help maintain and protect Michigan's vast water resources.

The Fertilizer Law

Michigan Fertilizer Law (1994 PA 451, Part 85, Fertilizers) restricts the use of phosphorus fertilizers on residential and commercial lawns, including athletic fields and golf courses statewide. Both homeowners and commercial applicators must follow the phosphorus application restrictions. However, there are a few exceptions. For exceptions visit www.michigan.gov/mda-fertilizer.



What Fertilizers do I Use?

Look for lawn fertilizers with zero phosphorus in them. On the bag or box of fertilizer is a row of three numbers. These numbers indicate the amount of total nitrogen (N), available phosphate (P2O5) and soluble potash (K2O) in the particular product. The middle number is available phosphate and should read "0".

Where Can I Find Phosphorus-free Fertilizers?

A majority of garden centers, hardware stores, and large chain stores carry phosphorus free lawn fertilizers.