

London Grove Township On-lot Sewage Management Program
Public Education Series #5:
Septic System Additives

There are approximately 1,200 additive products on the market today, most of which claim to accelerate the natural processes in a treatment tank or even rejuvenate a clogged soil absorption system.

There are two distinct categories of additives used in a septic system: 1) chemical, which includes inorganic and organic compounds and 2) biological, which includes yeast, bacteria, and enzymes.

Over the past 40 years, there have been several studies conducted on septic tank additives; however, there is still some debate on their effectiveness. Part of the problem stems from the number of additives that are marketed and the lack of an established standard testing method for all additives.

It is important to understand that a homeowner does not need to add anything to an on-lot sewage system that is designed, operated, and properly maintained because naturally occurring bacteria are already present within typical household sewage. Contrary to popular belief and urban legend, items such as road kill or yeast do not need to be added to a septic tank.

Chemical additives, such as caustic hydroxides and sulfuric acid, should never be added to a septic system. Adding these products will destroy the bacterial population in the septic tank, possibly affect the permeability of the drainfield, and may cause groundwater contamination. Often, manufacturers of biological additives market their use to restore the bacterial balance in a septic tank on a monthly basis as part of a routine maintenance program.

Claims made on the effectiveness of additives to either eliminate pumping of a septic tank or restore permeability of the soil absorption system are unsubstantiated. ***No product will allow a homeowner to replace a regular septic tank pumping and maintenance schedule.***