

HOMEOWNER SEPTIC CHECKLIST

For Georgia septic owners. Keep it with the house records; write the date beside each item when it is done.

Each year, walk the tank and drain field for wet spots or odors, test any pump alarm, check that gutters and sump lines drain away from the field, and write down water use changes. Have the tank inspected about every three years and pumped every three to seven, and keep every pumping receipt and county permit.

EVERY MONTH: A TWO-MINUTE WALK-AROUND

- ☐ **Look over the drain field** Done: _____
Wet or spongy ground, standing water or grass noticeably greener than the rest of the yard in a dry spell all deserve a note with the date.
- ☐ **Smell near the tank and field** Done: _____
A sewage odor outdoors, away from a roof vent, is worth a call rather than a wait.
- ☐ **Keep vehicles and heavy loads off** Done: _____
No parking, driving or stacking materials on the field; the EPA lists parking on the drain field among the main things to avoid.
- ☐ **Check for leaks inside** Done: _____
A toilet that runs or a dripping faucet sends water the system has to absorb every hour of the day.

ONCE A YEAR: THE FULL CHECK

- ☐ **Test the pump alarm if you have one** Done: _____
Most panels have a test switch; the horn or light should come on. If the system has a pump tank, a silent alarm is a failure waiting to be discovered. See what to do when a septic alarm goes off.
- ☐ **Walk the downspouts and sump line** Done: _____
Roof drains, sump pumps and other rainwater should run away from the field, not across it.
- ☐ **Look at what is growing over the lines** Done: _____
Grass is the right cover. Trees and shrubs belong well away from the field because roots can clog and break the pipes.
- ☐ **Review the household** Done: _____
More people, a new garbage disposal, a home business or a finished basement bathroom all change how fast the tank fills. Note it for the next pump-out.
- ☐ **Find the pump-out date** Done: _____
Check the last receipt. If you can't find one, or it is more than three years old, book an inspection.

EVERY 3 TO 5 YEARS: THE PUMP-OUT VISIT

- ☐ **Hire an approved pumper** Done: _____
Georgia DPH publishes its approved pumper list; ask the company to confirm it is on it.
- ☐ **Ask for the sludge and scum readings** Done: _____
The layer depths tell you whether the next visit should come sooner or can wait longer.
- ☐ **Have the baffles and outlet filter checked** Done: _____
A missing baffle or a clogged filter shows up at a pump-out long before it shows up in the house.

- ☐ **Consider risers** Done: _____
If the lids had to be dug up, risers make every future visit faster and cheaper.
- ☐ **File the receipt** Done: _____
Keep it with the house records. In Gwinnett, it also earns the stormwater fee credit.

BEFORE YOU SELL, ADD ON OR BUILD NEAR THE SYSTEM

- ☐ **Pull the county records** Done: _____
The county Environmental Health office holds the permit and as-built for most systems; Gwinnett has put its septic records online.
- ☐ **Check for a replacement area** Done: _____
Additions, pools and outbuildings can't go over the field or the ground set aside to rebuild it.
- ☐ **Talk to Environmental Health before adding bedrooms** Done: _____
Georgia sizes home tanks by bedroom count, so an added bedroom can mean a larger tank.
- ☐ **Schedule an inspection for a sale** Done: _____
Buyers and lenders often ask for one; see septic inspections when a Georgia home sells.

STOP CHECKING AND CALL IF YOU SEE THESE

- Sewage backing up into a tub, shower or floor drain
- Gurgling and slow drains all over the house
- Wet, smelly ground over the field that doesn't dry out
- An alarm that won't clear

Call (678) 863-5620

SOURCES

- US EPA - How to Care for Your Septic System
- UGA Extension Bulletin B1421, septic system care (rev. Oct 18, 2024)
- Gwinnett County DWR - Septic Tanks
- Georgia DPH - Don't Flush Your Money Down the Drain: Additives and Your On-site Sewage Management System
- Gwinnett County DWR - Stormwater Utility Fee Credits
- Georgia DPH Approved Septic Tank Pumpers list (9/18/2026)
- Gwinnett County - Septic Tank Records Now Available Online (news release, June 14, 2011)
- Georgia DPH Rules Chapter 511-3-1, On-Site Sewage Management Systems (Jan 2016)

Last updated 2026-09-23. Reviewed by Atlanta Water & Sewage Solutions. General guidance, not a permit or inspection; your county Environmental Health office has the final word. Full guide: atlantawatersewagesolutions.com/guides/homeowner-septic-checklist