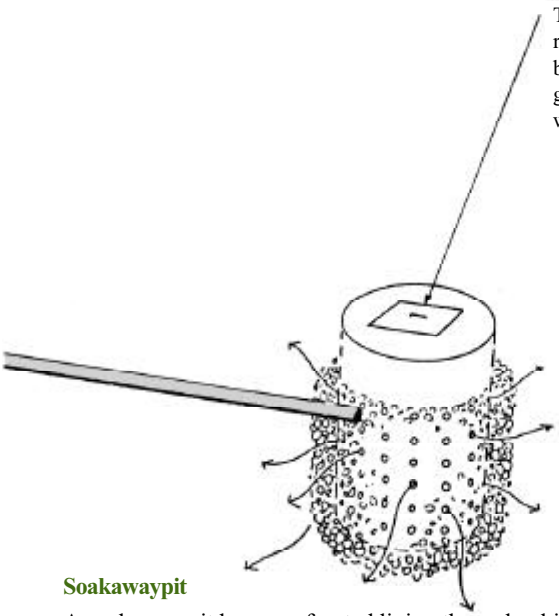
How does a Septic Tank System (STS) work?

4. A STS consists of a septic tank, a soakaway pit or some soakaway trenches, and the surrounding soil into which wastewater is finally disposed. The septic tank should be large enough to hold at least the volume of wastewater collected in one day. The soakaway system and the surrounding soil should be able to soak away the same volume in one day.

5. **OVERFLOW** from septic tank or soakaway pit, or direct discharge without passing through a soakaway system, is **POLLUTING** and should not be permitted.

6. Polluting material is only removed from the wastewater after travelling a long distance in the soil. Pollution would result if a STS is located too near to a beach, a stream, a well, etc., or even too near to a retaining wall where wastewater might seep out from the face of the wall.



Soakawaypit

A soakaway pit has a perforated lining through which discharge from the septic tank can soak into the surrounding soil. This discharge contains dissolved polluting material and also many small organisms (pathogens) that can cause illness. Soakaway trenches perform the same function as a soakaway pit, but are usually more efficient.

Surrounding Soil

As the discharge seeps through the surrounding soil, a process of natural purification occurs. This process includes the breakdown of the polluting material by bacteria occurring naturally in the soil, and the eventual "die off" of the pathogens. Adequate purification can only be achieved after the discharge has travelled a fairly long distance through the ground.