District Council of
Loxton Waikerie

Tree Roots Invading your Septic Tank System and Drains

Tree roots, in search of nutrients and moisture, can infiltrate residential septic systems. Tree roots can enter through cracks in pipe work and tanks, with older systems more likely to be effected. When roots enter pipes in a septic tank, various difficulties may ensue. For example, sinks, toilets, bathtubs, washing machines, and dishwashers may not drain properly due to roots obstructing the drains.

A tree root that has burrowed into a septic tank could break open the walls, leading to a major sewage leak. This is extremely hazardous to people and other animals as the gas and germs present in this waste may induce a variety of diseases. E-coli, salmonella, shigella, and cholera are only a few of the bacteria types that may be found in sewage.



To prevent and remove tree roots from septic tanks and drain you can:

- Once notified that roots are nearing your septic tank, engage a qualified plumber to remove. Prior to engaging in these works, have a clear idea about the location of underground pipes and cables. Before You Dig provides helpful information for homeowners.

- Limit the number of larger plants near your septic and associated pipes. Install root barriers if you must plant trees near the septic system.

- Know the warning signs. These include slow draining sinks, tubs, sewer odours, toilet back up, etc.

- If the issue has progressed and can no longer be prevented, engage a qualified plumber to perform a camera inspection. This will enable the plumber to locate the damaged areas and take appropriate action.

Please note - if a replacement septic tank is required approval must first be obtained from Council. For minor maintenance/repairs please forward evidence the work has been undertaken to council@lwdc.sa.gov.au (e.g., a receipt from a plumber).

In many cases, clearing the drain will only temporarily fix the problem and the roots can re-enter. Prevention, relining, or replacement is a better alternative.