

WATER BULLETIN

Water Quality Program, College of Human Ecology, Cornell University

Bacterial Additives and Septic tanks

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Do you wonder if bacterial additives could decrease the scum in your septic tank and therefore save money on tank pumping and system maintenance? Have you received inquiries regarding the effectiveness of additives at reducing septic tank scum? Results from landmark research have recently been released which can finally provide a more definitive answer to these types of questions.

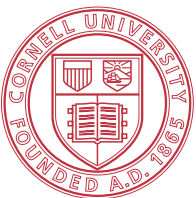
As a graduate student in North Carolina State University's Soil Science Department, Gregory H. Clark completed a master's thesis titled "*The Effect of Bacterial Additives on Septic Tank Performance*." His primary goal was to quantify the impact of bacterial additives upon septic tank performance through measurements of sludge depth, scum thickness, total suspended solids (TSS), biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) and microbial levels within treated and untreated tanks. To achieve his primary goal, Clark

- monitored and evaluated the effect of bacterial additives on the rate of sludge and scum accumulation in septic tanks
- assessed the effects of bacterial additives on TSS and BOD contents of septic tank effluent
- evaluated whether bacterial additives increase microbial levels in treated septic tanks versus untreated septic tanks

His research concluded that additives tested did not provide any substantial or long term statistically significant benefits. Although more research is needed before decisive conclusions can be drawn, Clark's research demonstrates there is yet to be proven any practical value from using bacterial septic tank additives. The best way to reduce septic tank scum is still to have your septic tank pumped every three to five years.

Don't throw your money down the drain by purchasing septic tank additives.

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