

Trees, Shrubs & Septic Systems

Tree root invasion of septic tank absorption fields, drop boxes, and tanks is a long standing problem in the maintenance of onsite wastewater treatment systems. Many trees and shrubs readily invade these systems because they can provide air space, water and nutrients. Not all trees and shrubs invade septic systems. Listed here are a number of species and the likelihood of their roots invading septic systems. The list is not exhaustive but includes those plants for which there is reliable information

Trees with roots commonly invading septic systems

Common Name	Latin Name
Boxelder	Acer negundo
Red Maple	Acer rubrum
Silver Maple	Acer saccharinum
Red Cedar	Juniperus virginiana
Cottonwood	Populus delt oids
Weeping Willow	Salix alba Tristis
Peachleaf Willow	Salix amygdaloides
Corkscrew Willow	Salix matsudana Tortuosa
Black Willow	Salix nigra
American Elm	Ulmus Americana
Siberian Elm	Ulmus pumila
Slippery Elm	Ulmus rubra

Trees with roots rarely invading septic systems

Common Name	Latin Name
Norway Maple	Acer platanoides
Sugar Maple	Acer saccharum
White Ash	Fraxinus Americana
Green Ash	Fraxinus pennsylvanica
Red Pine	Pinus resinosa
White Pine	Pinus Strobus
White Oak	Quercus alba
Bur Oak	Quercus macrocarpa
Red Oak	Quercus rubra

Shrubs with roots commonly invading septic systems

Common Name	Latin Name
Gray Dogwood	Cornus racemosa
Red-oser Dogwood	Cornus stolonifera
Autumn Olive	Elacagnus umbellate
Forsythia	Forsythia spp.
Common Buckthorn	Rhamnus cathartica
Pussy Willow	Salix discolor
Sandbar Willow	Salix interior

Information furnished by the
Morton Arboretum



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