

Landscaping Options for Onsite Systems

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What can you do with those candy cane-shaped septic vent pipes that protrude from your yard? You could decorate them with a red ribbon for Christmas, but how can you camouflage them for the remaining 11 months of the year?

There are options for homeowners to help hide those eyesores that sometimes come along with having an onsite septic system. Instead of wasting all that Christmas ribbon, why not just place The Dirty Bird, a Fake Rock, or a Septivent Roman column over that pipe?

The Dirty Bird

The Dirty Bird, a product manufactured by B.S. Design Corp. and covered by several patents, is a fully functional birdbath that also serves as a concealment device and odor-controlling filter for septic system vents. Installing The Dirty Bird is a three-step procedure that includes cutting the vent pipe to a set height, setting the pedestal over the pipe, and screwing on the threaded basin.

Bill Traut and Stan Sreda, co-owners of B.S. Design Corp, created the Dirty Bird. The idea came after the two spent several years working for a contractor installing septic systems in and around Sharon, Massachusetts. "Every time we would put in a system with one of those vents, people would come home from work and see that and think you left something in their yard," Traut said. "You would have to explain to them what it was, and they couldn't believe you would put something like that in their yard. They weren't happy to say the least."

Traut said that after he went to school for industrial design and Sreda for engineering, the pair began designing and testing the birdbath concept. "We wanted to design something that's commonly in people's yards, such as a bird bath," he said.

The Dirty Bird is made of polyethylene, with stainless steel hardware holding it together. The product comes with a charcoal filter that is guaranteed for up to a year. The birdbath comes in various colors, such as red granite, terra cotta, and sandstone. Or if you don't want a birdbath, you can use the product as a pedestal and add on any decorative item such as a potted plant or sundial. The retail cost of The Dirty Bird is \$250.00.

The Fake Rock

D.C. Works, Inc., provides decorative rocks that can cover components of onsite systems that need to be at or above ground surface. The fake rocks are lightweight and come in various shapes and sizes. The rocks feature hidden air holes and can be used to hide sep-



tic tank risers, manholes, lift stations, vent pipes, city sewer clean-outs, aerobic treatment units, chlorinator pipes, and wells.

Bob Warfel, owner and president of D.C. Works, installed and serviced septic systems for nearly 30 years. This experience gave him the idea for the Fake Rock. "Being that I was in the service industry for so many years, I was so tired of people planting thorn bushes around the unit," Warfel said. "When you got done servicing it, you looked like you were in a machete contest."

Warfel started making fake rocks in 1991 to help hide components of the onsite units. He makes rocks out of both hard plastic and fiberglass in any color or size the homeowner wants. Warfel said that the rocks are heavy and the wind doesn't blow them away. "They are strong enough to step on, but light enough to move," he said.

Warfel recommends that homeowners put mulch under the rocks so that they don't freeze to the ground in the winter. The rocks range in price anywhere from \$20 for a small rock to \$420 for a rock large enough to cover up an electric transformer.

As the word gets out, Warfel has been getting more and more orders for his fake rock. "People are getting fussier all the time; they want to hide it, but yet you want it to be easy for the service guy to get in and out to service it," he said.

Septivent Roman Column

Another option for homeowners who want to cover up septic vent pipes is to purchase a Septivent Roman column from Tech Mold, Inc. The Roman column is specifically designed to slip over a septic pipe vent. It is made of plastic and can be spray-painted any color the homeowner wishes.

Valorie Sibley-Daigle, who has been a septic system designer for 24 years, designed the Roman column. With all her experience, Daigle definitely understood the need for a product to disguise septic vent pipes. "There would be a gorgeous house sitting there with an ugly septic vent in the front and I thought, 'There's got to be a way to put something over that thing,'" she said.

She began designing the Septivent Roman column six years ago and it has been on the market now for a year and a half.

Daigle said that the column is designed to fit over a 4-inch pipe. A gazing ball, sundial, or potted flowers can be added to the column for extra decoration. The price of the Roman column is \$49.95 and does not come with a topper or a filter, but those features can be added.

Other Landscaping Options

Homeowners are often perplexed as to how to disguise the three- or four-foot-high hill in their yard that comes along with a mound septic system. The best things to plant on a mound system are low-maintenance grasses. Do not plant trees, scrubs, or any plant with an extensive root system on the mound. The mound can be framed with trees or shrubs, but they should be at least 20 feet away.

With any onsite system, planting is recommended because plants help in oxygen exchange and evaporation in your drainfield area. Therefore, covering your septic area with plastics, bark, gravel, or patio blocks set in sand won't give your septic system the same benefits as planting.

Any plants you choose should have noninvasive roots. Roots that invade your septic area can damage or break pipes. Trees and large shrubs are not

recommended in your septic area for that reason. Grasses are most recommended for your septic area because of their high evapotranspiration rate. Meadow grasses with mixed wildflowers are also an attractive cover for your septic system.

For more information on The Dirty Bird call (866) 968-9668, e-mail info@bsdesigners.com or visit www.bsdesigners.com. For information on the Fake Rock call (877) 329-6757, e-mail fakerock@juno.com, or visit www.fakerock.com. For more information on Septivent call (877) 236-9227 or visit www.ncmar.com/septivent.html.

Recommended ground coverings for onsite septic systems that are both safe and aesthetically pleasing.

Plants

Grass	Fescue
Ornamental grasses	
Wildflower meadow mixes	

Ground Coverings for Sunny Areas

Bugleweed	Soapwort
Carpet Heathers	Periwinkle
Cotoneaster	Kinnickinick
Ground Ivy	

Ground Coverings for Shaded Areas

Bunchberry	Wintergreen
Chameleon	Wild Ginger
Ferns	Sweet Woodruff
Mosses	

Editor's Note:

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