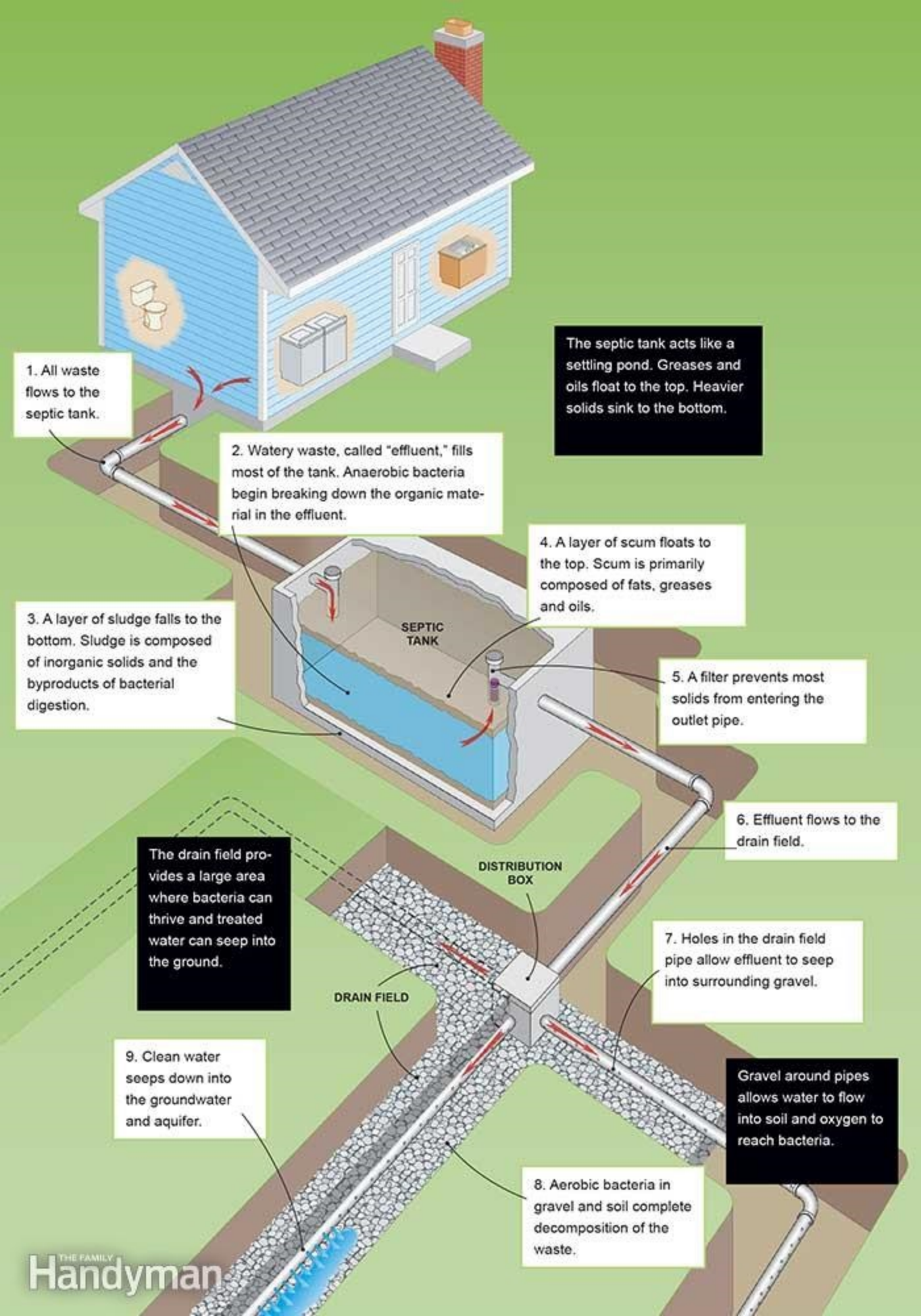
1. All waste flows to the septic tank.
2. Watery waste, called "effluent," fills most of the tank. Anaerobic bacteria begin breaking down the organic material in the effluent.
The septic tank acts like a settling pond. Greases and oils float to the top. Heavier solids sink to the bottom.
4. A layer of scum floats to the top. Scum is primarily composed of fats, greases and oils.
SEPTIC TANK
3. A layer of sludge falls to the bottom. Sludge is composed of inorganic solids and the byproducts of bacterial digestion.
5. A filter prevents most solids from entering the outlet pipe.
6. Effluent flows to the drain field.
The drain field provides a large area where bacteria can thrive and treated water can seep into the ground.
DISTRIBUTION BOX
7. Holes in the drain field pipe allow effluent to seep into surrounding gravel.
DRAIN FIELD
9. Clean water seeps down into the groundwater and aquifer.
Gravel around pipes allows water to flow into soil and oxygen to reach bacteria.
8. Aerobic bacteria in gravel and soil complete decomposition of the waste.
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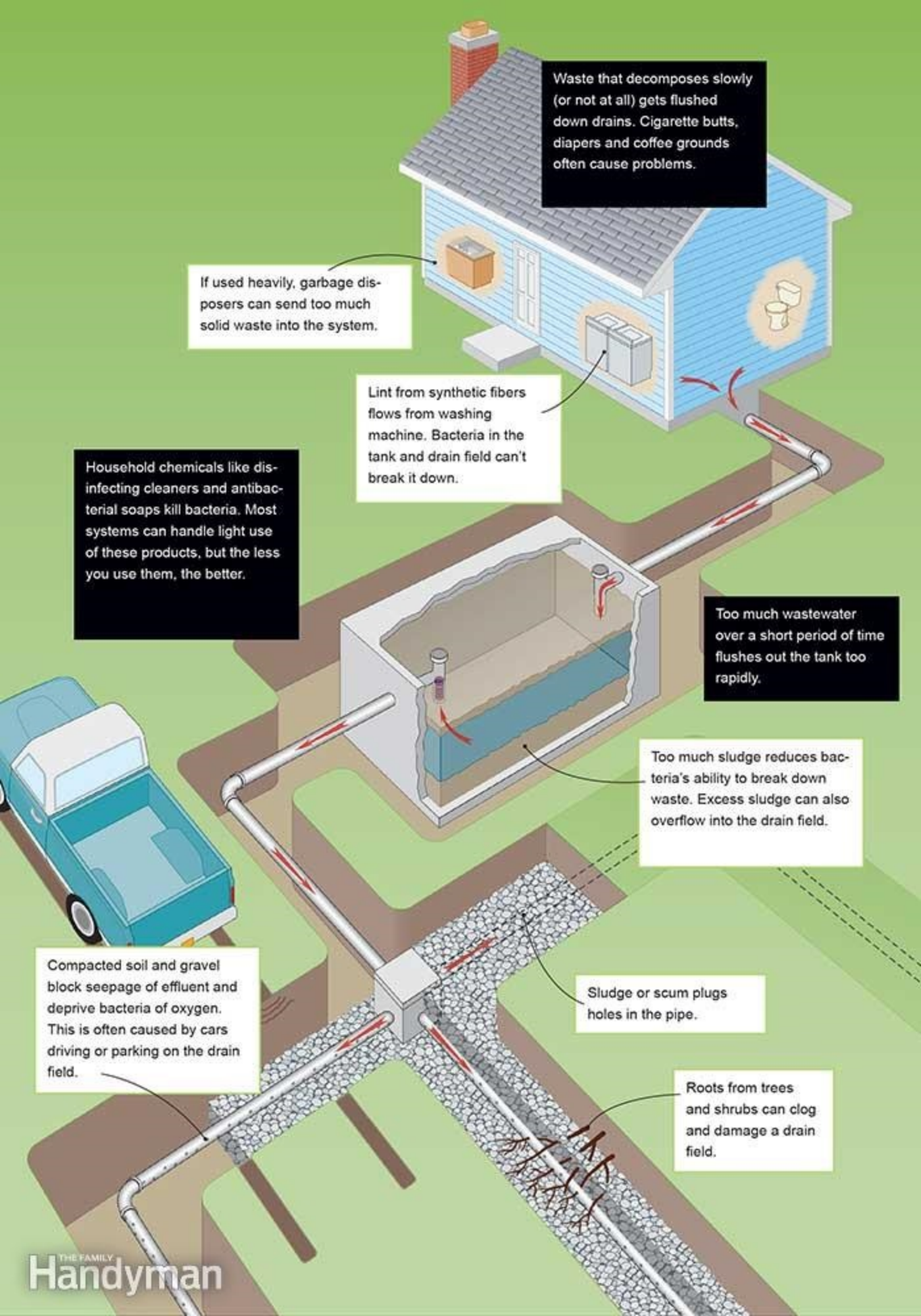
Waste that decomposes slowly (or not at all) gets flushed down drains. Cigarette butts, diapers and coffee grounds often cause problems.
If used heavily, garbage disposers can send too much solid waste into the system.
Lint from synthetic fibers flows from washing machine. Bacteria in the tank and drain field can't break it down.
Household chemicals like disinfecting cleaners and antibacterial soaps kill bacteria. Most systems can handle light use of these products, but the less you use them, the better.
Too much wastewater over a short period of time flushes out the tank too rapidly.
Too much sludge reduces bacteria's ability to break down waste. Excess sludge can also overflow into the drain field.
Compacted soil and gravel block seepage of effluent and deprive bacteria of oxygen. This is often caused by cars driving or parking on the drain field.
Sludge or scum plugs holes in the pipe.
Roots from trees and shrubs can clog and damage a drain field.
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