

BOOK REVIEW

*Septic tanks and aqua-privies from ferrocement*, by S. B. WATT, Intermediate Technology Publications, 1984, price £ 4. 95, pp. 98

The book was published by the Intermediate Technology Development Group which was founded in 1965 by Dr. E. F. Schumacher, whose widely known saying "small is beautiful" opened a new approach to thinking about technique.

The book is a practical application of Schumacher's approach to water treatment and sewage disposal in small farms and houses. It is a contribution to the constantly (but too slowly) increasing literature on the low-cost sanitation.

The whole text is arranged in three chapters.

In the first chapter the properties of ferrocement as a building material are described and its range of applications in which septic tanks and related techniques, such as aqua-privies, are used. The scope of ferrocement septic tanks application is reviewed.

The details concerning the design and construction of septic tank and aqua-privy waste treatment and soil disposal systems are given in chapter 2. The complexity of the physical, chemical and biochemical processes in waste treatment are emphasized to show how design should rely on specification.

The detailed step-by-step construction of ferrocement septic tank produced in North Wales is given in chapter 3. The information and specifications given there will be also readily adapted to design and construction of aqua-privies.

The book is of special interest for consultants and planners involved in improving sanitation of rural area both in the developing countries and industrialized ones. Public health engineers and field-workers engaged in sewage disposal may find the book useful.

I would recommend it as a supplementary literature for students in sanitary engineering, as it would help them to understand Schumacher's idea "small is beautiful" in sewage disposal. Sometimes a less sophisticated technique may be more useful than a high technology.

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