



Basic Tenets for Green Burial Cemeteries

What does a green burial cemetery look like?

Green burial cemeteries have many shared practices regardless of their type or governing structure. The goal is to provide opportunities to reduce environmental impact and contribute to sustainability. Every cemetery can find ways to offer more environmentally responsible practices while providing families with a rich, meaningful, and healing experience. Some green cemeteries are devoted to natural burial with organic, biodegradable goods and processes only, but others set aside a section in an existing conventional cemetery or intermingle natural burials with conventional plots.

What are the most common shared characteristics?

- No concrete, plastic or fiberglass vaults
- No embalming, or organic embalming
- Use of biodegradable materials

Limited use of:

- Electrical or gas powered equipment, such as mowers and weed whackers
- Fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides

Increased use of:

- Natural grave markers such as local wood or large stones
- Native plants that encourage habitat for birds, bees and animals
- Natural means of weed and pest control, such as controlled burn
- Locally sourced and crafted products, such as caskets, shrouds
- Memorial wall or cenotaph

Who wants a green burial?

The simple answer is that anyone might want this option, including people from spiritual traditions with uninterrupted vaultless burial practices. A more accurate description might be that green burial appeals to anyone who desires an exit that is in line with the way they have lived their life, what they valued, and what they believe to be authentic to their experience. Green burial transcends issues of money, race, and economic or social status. It is truly universal.

How much does a green burial cost?

Green cemetery plot pricing varies and is usually dependent on the going market price in any particular area. While the costs to consumers vary greatly with regard to purchasing funeral related items such as caskets and vaults, green cemeteries face similar challenges to conventional in cemetery operating. However, some green burial cemeteries work hard to keep the price affordable as part of their sustainable ethic. It is wise to contact the cemetery you are considering for the most up to date pricing information.

What might I look for in a green cemetery?

While there are many best practices to look for, inviting the family to participate is often an indicator of the cemetery's level of commitment to serving the family. This may include grave closing, decorating of burial container, carrying a loved one to the gravesite, lowering of a loved one into the gravesite, or adorning the grave prior to ceremony.