

The Case for Green Burial

promoting eco-friendly, noninvasive, natural burial practices

What is Green Burial?

Green burial is a way of caring for the dead with minimal environmental impact that aids in the conservation of natural resources, reduction of carbon emissions, protection of worker health, and the restoration and/or preservation of habitat.



Why replace conventional burial practices?

The standard conventional funeral, complete with embalming and burial in a lawn cemetery, is fraught with health hazards, and requires the permanent installation of non-biodegradable vaults around non-biodegradable caskets. Embalmers have an 8 times higher risk of contracting blood diseases such as leukemia, and 3 times higher risk of ALS, while groundskeepers are more than twice as likely to develop COPD; both are exposed routinely to chemicals known to cause cancer and neurological diseases. And each year, the US buries over 1.6 million tons of reinforced concrete – roughly 1-2 tons per vault, plus imported steel from China and exotic woods from rainforests in South America, creating a significant total of carbon emissions.

How is green burial really different?

The difference is in the non-invasive, eco-friendly methods used to care for the body prior to and during burial, not in the ways we honor our dead. In fact, rituals are on the rise as families find the natural setting of green burials conducive to both traditional and spontaneous celebrations of life and acknowledgment of their loss.

Green burial cemeteries:

- reduce carbon footprint and contribute to the natural eco-cycle
- occupy lands with intrinsic ecological quality and meaningful social value
- are managed as municipal cemeteries, land trusts, conservation lands, and recreational preserves in perpetuity
- allow biodegradable caskets, shrouds, urns, often made with local resources by local craftspeople
- do not allow embalming fluids, vaults, herbicides or pesticides
- mark locations by GPS, native memorials such as fieldstone
- provide teaching and research opportunities
- create recreational, cultural and spiritual opportunities, building community
- protect and restore wildlife habitat
- integrate sustainable native plant communities

Who is the Green Burial Council?

The Green Burial Council (GBC) is an independent certification and educational nonprofit organization offering environmental certificates for funeral homes, cemeteries, and product manufacturers. Advocacy and educational efforts help funeral providers, individuals, and organizations better understand the environmental, cultural and economic benefits of green funeral practices.

For more information, go to:

www.greenburialcouncil.org

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