



Questions to ask a woodland burial site

Are you actually getting a green burial?

With the growing popularity of natural burial, it appears that some providers are less interested in the environment than in getting a share of the profits to be made.

Anyone planning to have an environmentally friendly funeral should do some research beforehand to make sure their funeral does not fall victim to the new phenomenon of 'greenwash'*

* Greenwash – is a form of spin in which green PR or green marketing is deceptively used to promote the perception that an organization's products, aims and/or policies are environmentally friendly.

Here are some suggestions of checks you might like to make to ensure a burial ground is a truly green, environmentally friendly one.

- Is embalming discouraged / prohibited (other than in exceptional circumstances) by the burial ground? Is this stated clearly in their literature, website and on their notice of interment forms?
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- Do coffins have to be made from recycled / environmentally friendly, biodegradable materials or are MDF veneered or hardwood coffins permitted? Again, are these requirements easily found in their literature etc?
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- Are coffins permitted to have plastic 'crem film' lining?
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- At what depth are bodies buried? (Aerobic decomposition is enhanced the shallower the grave, burial 'six feet under' will result in anaerobic decomposition)
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- What measures are taken to enhance biodiversity / protect and improve habitats?
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- What types of memorials are allowed?
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- What is the policy about items placed inside the coffin by families?
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- What may be left on top of the graves?
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- What is the planting policy of the burial ground? Are only native species of flowers and trees permitted? Is their provenance important to the burial site?
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- Will they allow families to conduct funerals without a funeral director? If not, it may also indicate that doing business with funeral directors and keeping them on side is more important to the site than insisting that undertakers comply with their environmental requirements.

The Association of Natural Burial Grounds

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