

# Consumer's Guide to Burial and Cremation Options



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**Planning a funeral is akin to organizing any other event, but with the added complexity of managing individuals under significant stress. It's crucial to craft a meaningful and comforting experience for attendees. Effective planning ensures that loved ones can fully engage in the funeral proceedings, fostering lasting memories for years to come.**

**To ensure effective planning, we'll start by examining funeral service options.**

## Traditional Full-service Funeral

This traditional funeral typically involves a viewing or visitation, a formal funeral service, transportation of the deceased in a hearse to the funeral site and cemetery, and burial, entombment, or cremation of the remains.

It's typically the costliest funeral option, encompassing expenses such as the funeral home's basic fee, embalming, dressing the deceased, rental of the funeral home for viewing or service, and vehicle use if needed. Additionally, expenses for a casket, cemetery plot or crypt, and other funeral goods and services should be considered.





## Direct Burial

The deceased is buried shortly after death, typically in a simple container, without viewing or embalming. A memorial service may occur at the graveside or later. Direct burial is generally less expensive than a traditional full-service funeral. Expenses cover the funeral home's basic fee, transportation and care of the deceased, purchase of a casket or burial container, and cemetery space or crypt. Additional fees may apply if the family opts for a graveside service at the cemetery.



## Direct Cremation

The deceased is promptly cremated without embalming, and the ashes are placed in an urn or container. There is no viewing or visitation. Options for the ashes include keeping them at home, burial, placement in a cemetery crypt or niche, or scattering in a preferred location (local regulations should be checked beforehand).

Direct cremation is typically more economical than a traditional full-service funeral. Expenses cover the funeral home's basic fee, transportation, and care of the deceased. The crematory fee might be inclusive or added separately if not owned by the funeral

home. Additionally, there's a charge for an urn or container, and cemetery space or crypt costs are included only if burial or entombment of the urn is chosen.

Funeral providers offering direct cremations must also provide an alternative container as a substitute for a casket.

## The Cemetery Burial Option

Honoring our loved ones at their final resting place is a cherished tradition spanning cultures and time. From ancient Egyptian pyramids to grand mausoleums or simple burial sites, dignified remembrance holds significant importance. Caring for and visiting these places fosters connection and allows us to honor cherished memories.

Cemeteries offer a serene setting for our loved ones' repose and for us to pay our respects.



## Types of Cemetery Properties

Similar to funeral homes, cemeteries offer various dignified options tailored to the family's preferences and budget. Choices include individual burial spaces for caskets or



urns (for cremation) and group spaces for multiple family members. The range of options depends on the cemetery's offerings and available inventory.

When choosing a cemetery, consider seeking recommendations from friends, colleagues, clergy, or a funeral director. Inquire about the cemetery's maintenance practices, including whether it's a perpetual care cemetery where a portion of the purchase price is allocated for upkeep. Ask about rules regarding flower placement, monument types (upright or flat), and permissions for seasonal decorations on gravesites.



Common burial options include:

- Single-Depth Burial Space: Used for one casket or coffin, with cemetery policies dictating acceptable grave memorials (flat or upright).
- Double-Depth Burial Space: Accommodates two caskets or coffins, with the first buried deeper than normal and the second at standard depth atop the first.
- Family Burial Space: Designated area for multiple family members, with options for the number of burial spaces available.
- Lawn Crypt: Similar to a standard burial space, may be single or double depth, with a pre-placed concrete grave liner (crypt) for the casket.

- Mausoleum: Above-ground building for casket placement, featuring crypts for one or two caskets, and available in outdoor or climate-controlled indoor settings.
- Private Estates: Customizable options such as private mausoleums or dedicated burial spaces within a designated area, with some cemeteries offering bespoke family estates built to specifications.

## Casket Options

Caskets are commonly made of wood or metal, with costs primarily determined by the materials and interior fabric quality. Various options are available across different price ranges to meet individual preferences.

Choosing a casket is a personal decision influenced by the deceased's preferences, budget, and individual taste. Various options cater to different family needs.

Casket interiors vary from basic crepe fabric to luxurious plush velvet. Some caskets are also built to be "protective," resistant to outside elements and substances.



## Outer Burial Container Options



Most cemeteries mandate an outer burial container around the casket to support the grave's weight and protect the casket from damage during routine maintenance. This container also helps maintain the grave's level, enhancing the cemetery's appearance.

Similar to caskets, your choices for the outer burial container may vary depending on the cemetery's regulations. Common materials for outer burial containers include concrete and various metals.

## What is natural or green burial?

A green or natural burial minimizes environmental impact, conserves resources and habitats, promotes worker health, and cuts carbon emissions.

Various aspects of the death care process can adopt green or natural practices. While achieving full "green" status may not always be feasible, it's vital to explore available options.



Traditionally, funerals incorporate a viewing or wake. This public or private gathering prior to the funeral allows family and friends to gather and say good-bye to a loved one.

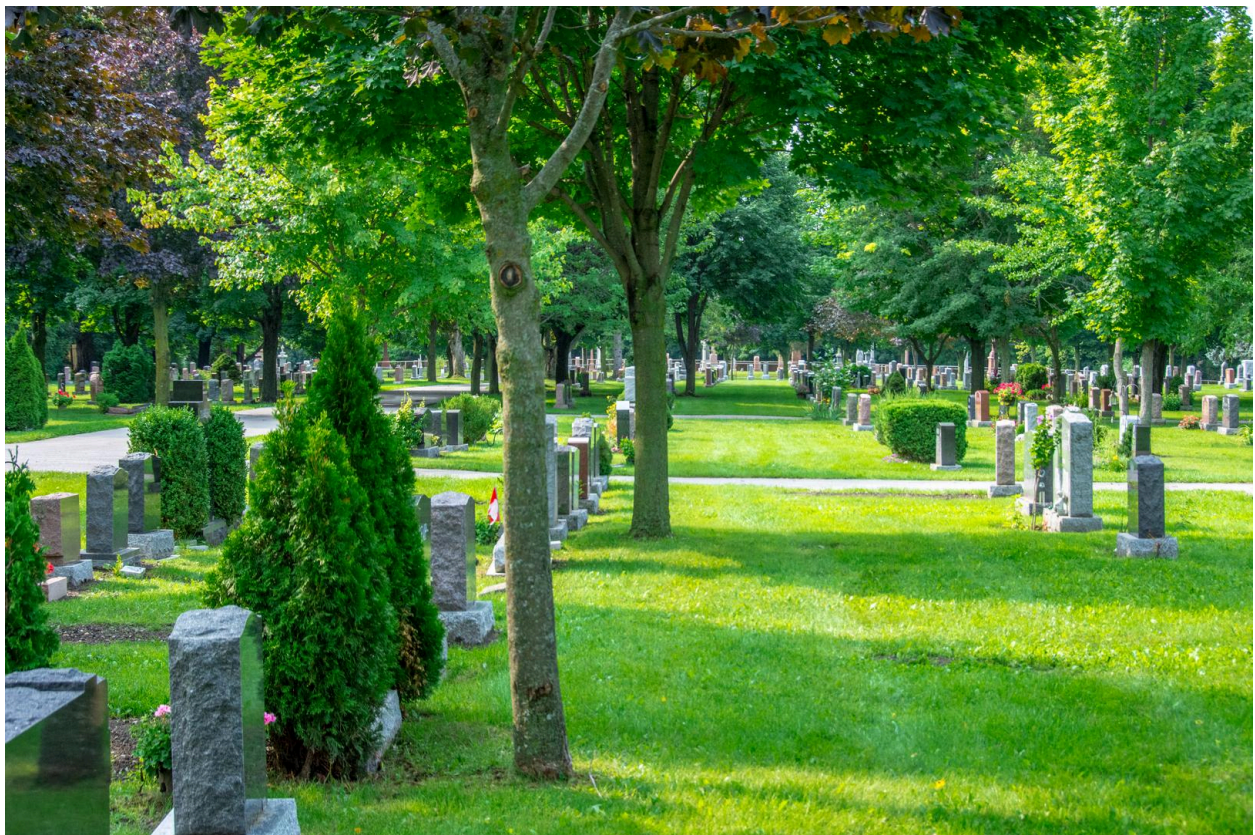


When a green funeral occurs, it does not need to replace funeral traditions. There will, however, likely be some changes.

Traditionally, funerals feature a viewing or wake, providing an opportunity for loved ones to gather and say farewell. A green funeral doesn't necessarily replace these traditions but may involve some alterations.

In a green burial, both the casket/urn and its burial method can be considered environmentally friendly. Traditional caskets, made of materials that take years to biodegrade and often painted with harsh chemicals, contrast with biodegradable options such as unpainted wood, cardboard, or other natural materials.

Your choice of cemetery can also contribute to green practices. Green cemeteries offer varying levels of certification, with some adopting a hybrid model that reserves certain areas for green burials. In these sections, burial vaults or liners aren't mandatory.



Some cemeteries are entirely green and natural, imposing stricter regulations on materials for grave markers and monuments, as well as pesticides for lawn



maintenance. In these cemeteries, all burials must adhere to green standards, utilizing biodegradable caskets without grave liners or vaults.

## What is a green cemetery?

Three types of green cemeteries require certification from the Green Burial Council to be recognized as truly green.

### **Hybrid Cemeteries or Burial Grounds**

Hybrid cemeteries integrate green burial areas within traditional cemeteries. These sections must adhere to green burial standards, including the absence of grave liners and allowing biodegradable caskets. Embalming isn't mandatory in hybrid burial grounds.



### **Natural Cemeteries or Burial Grounds**

Natural cemeteries or burial grounds disallow grave liners, embalming with traditional chemicals, and non-natural burial containers. They maintain grounds without pesticides for a natural appearance and limit memorial markers to preserve the natural aesthetic.

### **Conservation Cemeteries or Burial Grounds**

Conservation burial grounds represent the most environmentally friendly option. These sites must meet all criteria for natural cemeteries and are often government or non-profit-owned land preserves. They ensure long-term land stewardship and are specifically designated for conservation purposes. Currently, there are only seven such cemeteries in the US. Conservation cemeteries serve as memorials and opportunities for visitors to connect with nature, often featuring hiking paths and connections to state parks.

To locate a green burial cemetery nearby, visit the Green Burial Council website, which features a directory of certified cemeteries across the U.S.

## After The Basics Are Covered

Once the fundamental funeral decisions are made, planning for the emotional and spiritual aspects of the participants' funeral experience begins. These aspects are influenced by the basic decisions made earlier, affecting how the person's life is commemorated through art, music, photographs, videos, artifacts, and other memorials. Once these initial decisions are settled, the rest of the funeral or memorial experience can naturally come together.