MuellerMemorial
FUNERALS AND CREMATION

THE CREMATION PLACEMENT GUIDE

What to do when cremated remains are still at home

"Temporary has a way of becoming permanent."

A practical guide to making a permanent, meaningful plan. Without pressure and without making it more complicated than it needs to be.

A new reason to have the conversation

The first National Cremation Placement Day will be observed on October 17, 2026, and then annually on the third Saturday in October. It was created to encourage families to move from "we'll decide later" to a thoughtful permanent plan.

If the ashes are still at home, you are not alone.

Many families bring cremated remains home fully intending to decide on a permanent place later. That can be a perfectly reasonable decision at the time. The problem is that later has a way of becoming years.

Life gets busy. Family members disagree. Costs are a factor. The right location is not obvious. Nobody wants to make the wrong decision. So the urn stays on a mantel, in a cabinet, on a bookshelf, or eventually in a box that moves from one house to another.

Research by the Cremation Association of North America found that **1 in 4 American households contain cremated human remains.** That means this is not an unusual family situation. It is a very common decision to be left unmade.

Even if placement is in a spot of honor–on a mantle or shelf display– and is the intended permanent location, what will be the plan for those ashes in a generation or two from now? Will great-grandchildren want those sets of ashes in their home?

The question is not: "Is it wrong to keep an urn at home?"

No. Keeping cremated remains at home can be a deliberate permanent choice, for now. The question is, what will happen when you are no longer the caretaker of the cremated remains?

Or, if your family is holding ashes at home and always meant for that situation to be temporary, what happens if no one ever gets around to deciding what comes next?

A permanent plan does not have to be expensive, formal, or traditional.
It should simply answer a few questions:

- Where will the cremated remains be permanently?
- Who in the family knows what was decided, and where is the record of that decision?
- How will future generations know who this person was, and where their ashes were placed?

If you can answer those three questions, you're well on your way.

Why I am sharing this

I have spent my career helping families make funeral decisions, and I still managed to put this one off. So this guide is not written to scold anyone. It is meant to make a decision that has been sitting in the background a little easier to finish.

What are the permanent placement options?

There is no single “right” answer. The best choice is one that fits the person, the family, the budget, and the kind of place you want future generations to be able to find or remember.

Placement in a cemetery

A burial plot

An urn can be buried in a cemetery plot just as a casket can. Some cemeteries allow cremated remains to be buried more shallowly in an existing, occupied, family-owned grave. Even when the grave is already owned and occupied, the cemetery may charge a fee for a second right of interment, as well as an opening and closing fee. Some cemeteries will also require an urn vault. The cemetery can provide a written estimate for all costs before you decide.

A niche or columbarium

A niche is a small compartment designed for an urn (or a pair of urns) that is usually part of a permanent wall or structure called a columbarium. It may be indoors or outdoors and the individual niches are nearly always identified with the person’s name and dates.

An ossuary

An ossuary is a shared memorial space where cremated remains from multiple individuals are placed together rather than retained in separate urns or niches. Rather than commingling ashes, some cemeteries keep ashes separated inside the ossuary within individual bags. The names of those placed in the ossuary are generally recorded on a nearby memorial.

A cremation garden

Some cemeteries have serene garden areas designed specifically for cremated remains, with options that may include burial, shared memorial features, or designated scattering areas.

A Memorial Forest

Unlike a traditional cemetery, a memorial forest provides a place where cremated remains are returned to the earth in a natural, existing forest setting. Families purchase a forest memorial tree and place cremated remains in a “nest” of forest floor material at the base of the tree along with a small bronze marker noting the name and dates.

Better Place Forests in Scandia, Minnesota offers both individual Memorial Trees and shared Spreading Groves. Better Place Forests – Scandia and other memorial forest options

A deliberate home placement
For some families, keeping an urn at home truly is the permanent plan. If that is the choice, document it clearly and decide who will become responsible for the remains in the future.

Solidified remains with Parting Stone

Parting Stone offers another option: the cremated remains can be transformed into a collection of solid stones rather than kept as ash particles in a container or urn. The stones are smooth and easier to handle, transport, divide among family members, or place in more than one meaningful location.

Mueller Memorial has a special offer available for families considering Parting Stone. Contact us before ordering so we can explain how the process works, discuss whether it fits your family's plans.

Gemstone Transformation

Another option is to transform a small portion of cremated remains into a memorial gemstone or diamond, while the remaining ashes can still be buried, scattered, placed in a niche, solidified into stones, or handled in another way.

Eterneva creates genuine laboratory-grown diamonds using carbon extracted from cremated remains. The finished diamond can be incorporated into jewelry, creating a permanent memorial that can be kept close or passed to another generation. Reach out to Mueller Memorial to get started.

Scattering of ashes

Scattering can be meaningful when a location had special importance. It also requires more planning than people sometimes expect, including gaining permission, considering wind, and a decision about whether there will be a permanent marker or record made elsewhere.

Scattering on property you own

Scattering on family land can be incredibly meaningful. Consider if you want to include some sort of marker, like an engraved natrual stone or woodcarving. Also be aware that if you ever sell the property, **scattered remains do not count as a burial on the property** and the new owners do not have any obligation to allow you to access the scattering grounds.

Scattering on other private property

You must **get permission from a private property owner to scatter ashes.** Golf courses, Disneyland, cemeteries, these are all spaces that would require permission from the owner to scatter. If you scatter without it, it is likely the ashes will be cleaned up and discarded.

Scattering in national or state parks

Scattering ashes is generally not permitted in national or state parks without a permit, and getting that permit depends heavily on the state and park in which you wish to scatter. If you plan to seek a permit, **check with the individual park directly** a month or more in advance. Minnesota state parks do not allow scattering.

Water scattering

Many people are surprised to learn that cremated remains float. It's best to be prepared for this and have a plan. Moving water is best; a wake, rolling shoreline, or river flow will help incorporate the cremated remains into the water. As with all scattering, plan to **scatter very close to where you want the ashes to land** so a breeze will not blow them back to you.

If you are considering scattering in Minnesota

Scattering can be meaningful, but it should be handled deliberately. Minnesota law defines scattering as the authorized dispersal of cremated remains in a dedicated cemetery or in an area where no local prohibition exists. Written permission from the property owner or governing agency is required, and the remains must not be left in a container or distinguishable to the public.

Before scattering anywhere

Check the rules for the exact property. Public lands, parks, waterways, cemeteries, and private property can have different requirements. A funeral director can help you identify who to contact, but permission ultimately comes from the owner or governing agency.

Before you scatter, consider one more issue: scattering solves the question of where the physical remains will be, but it does not automatically create a permanent place of remembrance.

Some families pair scattering with a marker, a cemetery record, a family grave inscription, a memorial bench, or another permanent record. The point is not to make scattering more complicated. It is to make sure the person does not disappear from the family story.

Keep a written record of:

- ☐ The person's full legal name and dates of birth and death
- ☐ Where and when the scattering took place
- ☐ Who was present
- ☐ Who gave permission for the scattering
- ☐ Where the family can find any related documents, cemetery record, or memorial information

What does permanent placement cost?

Costs vary widely by cemetery, location, memorial choice, urn, opening and closing fees, and whether a family already owns cemetery property. Because of that, we would rather help you compare real options than pretend there is one typical price.

Ask for the complete number

When comparing options, ask what the total cost will be — not just the price of the grave, niche, or memorial. There may also be opening and closing charges, second right of interment fees, urn vault requirements, engraving, permits, marker costs, or other fees.

A good planning conversation should help you compare options at different price points.
It should not start with the most expensive answer.

Questions worth asking:

- ☐ Can the urn be placed in an existing family grave?
- ☐ Is a right of second interment required, and what does it cost?
- ☐ Is an urn vault required?
- ☐ What are the opening and closing charges?
- ☐ What memorial or engraving is required or allowed?
- ☐ Are there lower-cost cremation sections or community options?
- ☐ Would solidifying the remains through Parting Stone give our family more useful options for sharing, handling, or placement?
- ☐ If scattering is chosen, is there a cemetery or memorial record that can still preserve the person's name?
- ☐ Are there fees that could change if we wait, or fees the cemetery may be willing to reduce or waive?

National Cremation Placement Day gives families a good reason to ask.
If you are considering placement in a family-owned grave, ask the cemetery whether it is participating in the observance or if they would consider reducing or waiving a right-of-second-interment fee in connection with the event. There is no guarantee, but it is a reasonable question to raise when making a permanent placement plan.

At Mueller Memorial, our role is to help you understand the choices and the costs clearly enough that you can decide what makes sense for your family.

How do we decide what fits our family?

Start with the person, not the urn. The container is only part of the decision. The better question is: what would make sense as this person's permanent place of remembrance?

□ Was there a cemetery, family plot, church, community, hometown, lake, park, or other place that mattered to this person?

□ Did this person ever say what they wanted done with their cremated remains?

□ Is there another family member they would naturally be placed near?

□ Do we want a place people can physically visit, and is it important that the place be nearby?

□ Do we want the person's name permanently recorded somewhere?

□ If we scatter, what will indicate the permanent place or record of remembrance?

□ What can the family comfortably afford?

□ Who needs to be part of the decision before we proceed?

A useful test
Imagine someone in the family asks 25 years from now, "Where is Grandma?" Would the next generation be able to answer the question? If the answer is yes, the plan is probably doing its job.

You do not need a grand memorial to make a good decision. A simple burial with a small marker, placement in a family grave, a niche, or a carefully planned scattering can all be meaningful. Cost and meaning are not the same thing.

A simple plan you can finish this month

Youdonotneed tosolveeverythingtoday.Butyoucanmovethedecision forward in a few straightforward steps.

1. Identify exactly what you have

Confirm whose cremated remains are in your home and whether you have the **cremation certificate, burial permit, cemetery paperwork, or other records.**

2. Talk with the people who should be involved

Do not create a surprise if siblings or other close family members reasonably expect to be part of the decision.

3. Narrow the choices to two or three

For example: placement with a spouse, a nearby niche, or scattering at a meaningful location.

4. Get real costs and rules

Call the cemetery, church, property owner, governing agency, or funeral home. Ask for the complete cost and any restrictions.

5. Choose a date

A decision without a date can easily become another year of waiting.

6. Document what you did

Keep the final paperwork where the family can find it. Tell at least one other person where the record is kept.

Use National Cremation Placement Day as your deadline

The first National Cremation Placement Day is October 17, 2026. If cremated remains have been waiting at home for years, use the day as a reason to finally make the call, choose the place, or set the date.

Your Family Placement Worksheet

Use this page to get the conversation started. You don't need every answer before calling us.

Whose cremated remains are we planning for?

Where are the cremated remains currently kept?

Did this person leave any instructions or express a preference?

Who should be included in the decision?

Is there an existing family cemetery lot, niche, or grave?

If yes, have we asked about right-of-second-interment, opening/closing, or other fees?

What places had special meaning to this person?

Would solidified remains make sharing or placement easier for our family?

□ Yes □ No □ Unsure

Would we like a permanent place to visit? □ Yes □ No □ Unsure

Would we like the person's name permanently recorded somewhere? □ Yes □ No □ Unsure

What budget feels comfortable for the family?

Our top two or three options are:

Our Permanent Placement Plan

Once the decision is made, keep this page with other important family records.

Name of person _____

Date of birth _____

Date of death _____

Permanent placement choice _____

Cemetery / property / location _____

Date of placement or scattering _____

Memorial or marker information _____

Funeral home / cemetery contact _____

Where related documents are stored _____

One last step

Tell another family member that the plan has been completed and where this record can be found. That small conversation is what keeps the decision from becoming a mystery years from now.

Let’s Find a Permanent Place.

If cremated remains have been at home for months or years, you do not need to know all the answers before you call us. You don’e even have to have used Mueller Memorial for the original cremation. Bring us the situation. We can help you understand the options, ask the right questions, and work toward a permanent plan that fits your family and your budget.

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A note about this guide

This guide is general educational information, not legal advice. Cemetery rules, property rules, local ordinances, and fees can differ. Confirm the requirements for the exact location before burial, placement, or scattering.

Background sources

National Cremation Placement Day: Coldspring, “National Cremation Placement Day to Launch October 17, 2026.”

Household cremated-remains research: Cremation Association of North America (CANA), 2022 consumer research and subsequent memorialization guidance.

Minnesota scattering requirements: Minnesota Statutes §149A.02, subd. 37c, and related provisions of Chapter 149A.