



ROYAL OAK BURIAL PARK

WHERE MEMORIES LIVE FOREVER

NATURAL BURIAL AT ROYAL OAK BURIAL PARK

WHAT IS NATURAL 'Green' BURIAL?

Natural burial, also commonly referred to as green burial, is an environmentally sensitive alternative to more conventional interment practices where the body is returned to the earth to decompose naturally and be recycled into new life.

The body is prepared for burial without embalming and is buried in a simple shroud or biodegradable casket that might be made from sustainable, locally harvested wood, wicker or even recycled paper.

Memorialization in a natural burial site will be less intrusive on the landscape. 'Natural' markers can be placed on the graves and will include local wildflowers and indigenous shrubs and trees. Planting native trees, shrubs and flowers on or near the grave establishes a living memorial and helps form a protected wildlife preserve. A completed natural burial preserve is a green place with trees, grasses, and wildflowers, which in turn will bring birds and other wildlife to the area.

Irrigation is not used, nor are pesticides and herbicides applied. The intent of a natural burial site is to restore, preserve and protect nature while establishing a dignified place where family and friends can visit and be at peace.

A centralized memorial, featuring one or a series of local boulders inscribed with the names of deceased buried at the site will be set at the entrance to the site or within the emerging forest. These common memorials will serve as focal points to provide a place for family and visitors to remember those interred.

As in all cemeteries, there are careful records kept of the exact location of each interment, often using modern survey techniques such as GIS (geographic information system) and locating technology like GPS (global positioning system).

Natural burial preserves located within an existing cemetery will be protected - in perpetuity - from future development while the establishment of a conservation easement by the cemetery operator will prevent future operators from altering the original intent for these burial grounds. These protective measures are what permit natural burial preserves to function as a natural landscape restoration and conservation tool.

Natural burial is a statement of personal values for those who seek to minimize their impact on the local and global environment. For people who are mindful of the cyclical nature of life, natural burial is a spiritually fulfilling alternative to the conventional burial.

ROYAL OAK BURIAL PARK'S NATURAL BURIAL SITE

Royal Oak Burial Park has designated approximately 1/3 of an acre within the Burial Park to accommodate natural burial practices. We believe our green burial section will be the first of its kind in an urban cemetery in Canada.



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This will be our first natural burial section but certainly not our last. In fact, the Burial Park has committed that future development impacting the wooded areas of our 134 acre site will be developed following only natural burial principles.

The first natural burial site will be maintained in a woodlands meadow style of appearance with wild flowers and natural ground cover, and all plantings and trees will be indigenous to lower Vancouver Island. Maintenance will be in keeping with the meadow appearance, with watering by rain only and no pesticides, herbicides or fertilizers utilized.

Burials will take place in this section under the following general principles:

- Remains buried in this area may not be embalmed.
- Remains may be placed directly in the ground so long as they are enclosed in a biodegradable shroud – OR – placed into the grave in a biodegradable container or casket.
- Families will be permitted to plant indigenous plants or trees on their gravesites.
- An inscription of names on a common memorial cairn, made of local stone, at the entrance to the site will replace individual memorial markers at each grave.
- Outer liners will not be used and caskets made of non-sustainable or non-biodegradable materials will not be permitted.

It is our goal to have the natural burial site designed, a lot plan completed, and usage guidelines and draft pricing ready by late spring of 2008. Following completion of this design phase it is our goal to have the natural burial site ready for use in the fall of 2008.

Development of our green burial site is in keeping with a history of being 'first responders' to the changing final disposition preferences of this community. We opened the first crematorium and cremation garden on Vancouver Island in 1937, we opened the first community mausoleum on the Island in 1996 and we look forward to opening the first green burial site in Canada in 2008.

Royal Oak Burial Park is B.C.'s largest community owned cemetery. It is operated on a not for profit, self financing basis and is one of only a few municipal cemeteries in Canada that operates without any tax-payer / tax-dollar subsidy.

The Burial Park has land holdings of 134 acres of which 67 are developed. Of the remaining land, the Board has committed to the community to retain approx. 25 acres in a completely natural state with no interment activity at all.

Ultimately, our responsibility as community cemetery operators is to offer as many options to the community as we can. Options like green burial, or cremation with scattering, or mausoleum entombment, so that every family can find the means to best fulfill their personal remembrance needs.

Please check back with us in the spring of 2008 when we will have more information to provide.