

Green Burial at Robinson Cemetery, Calais, Vermont

In 2019, the Calais Cemetery Commission designated a “Green Burial Section” at the Robinson Cemetery. Green Burials are also permitted to be interspersed within the existing cemetery plots at the Robinson Cemetery (some restrictions may apply).

Green or natural burial is a way of caring for the dead that promotes the natural decomposition of the body with minimal impact to the environment. The deceased are buried without the use of embalming fluids, burial vaults or modern caskets and are instead buried in a simple, biodegradable casket or in a shroud. People choose green burial for a host of reasons; religious tradition, spiritual meaning, environmental ethics, simplicity, cost.

If you’re considering a Green Burial, we recommend pre-purchasing a plot and letting your family and/or friends know your burial wishes (include your burial wishes in your advanced care directive documents and keep a copy of your burial deed). If your funeral plans include hiring a licensed funeral director, it is often helpful to find one in advance who will work with you to plan and honor your green burial wishes.

Families are not required to hire a licensed funeral director in the State of Vermont. Should you decide to care for your own dead, you will need to contact the Calais Cemetery Sexton to make arrangements for your burial and to understand your responsibilities.

Any plant-based biodegradable container is acceptable for Green Burials. Unfinished wooden caskets, wicker and woven caskets, cardboard, paper mâché and shrouds made of natural fibers are all acceptable options.

Shrouded bodies must arrive at the cemetery entirely wrapped and supported by a solid unfinished wooden board for lowering. A board the

approximate width and length of the body is recommended. Plywood and particle support boards are not permissible.

Families and friends are encouraged to be involved in a Green Burial as much as they feel comfortable. While family and friends are not permitted to dig the grave, they would be welcome to participate by:

Placing boughs and flowers in the grave and/or on the body

Lowering the body into the grave with hand straps (4-6 people will need to be identified prior to the service. If there are not enough people are in attendance to help with this task, the family can opt for the lowering device or have cemetery personnel lower the body after the service has ended).

Filling in the grave with soil, partially or fully

What to expect:

- Families, friends and cemetery personnel will meet at the entrance to Robinson Cemetery
- The deceased will be transferred from a vehicle to the burial location.
- Once at the gravesite, the body will be transferred to rest on boards on top of the pre-dug grave.
- The service/memorial/ceremony will take place.
- After the service, the body will be lowered into the grave.
- Family and friends will then have the opportunity to fill in the grave with boughs, flowers and the soil should they wish

Please note: flat grass markers and plantings are permissible in the Green Burial Section, but they must be approved by the Calais Cemetery Commission before installation.

Calais Cemetery Contact:
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