

The Cremation Conquest: Why Not a Green Burial?

by Emily Miller

THE RISE OF DIRECT CREMATIONS has impacted service revenues across wide sectors of the funeral and cemetery industry. Direct cremations with minimum urns for take-home or scattering are making the least use of our service capabilities and bypass our merchandise and cemetery offerings. At the same time, the families choosing these minimums pride themselves on their practical choices and frugality.

Any offer of an additional service or cemetery choice for cremated remains must now compete in the consumer's mind with the scattering option, or the option to take home and not decide disposition now, both

of which incur no cost.

To recoup any chance of additional revenue with our minimum cremation clients, we must first demonstrate the value of doing something instead of nothing.

Perceived Value

Natural burial for cremation can offer an additional type of perceived value to a family seeking disposition options, from their understanding of the cemetery space to their relationship with death and bereavement.

Whether it is a meadow section in a traditional cemetery or a dedicated natural burial ground, a less manicured environment changes the thought process around

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to the wind every day. Natural urn burial with habitat restoration is a new argument for the value of cemetery services, which appeals to the environmentally friendly consumer but also invites any family to find the timeless healing of nature's lessons. **M**



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of all sizes. In 2020, Emily founded the Colorado Burial Preserve & Cremation Garden as the first cemetery in the state with a habitat restoration mission. She now works as an industry trainer, advocating for a more sustainable profession that helps people engage with the dying process through ritual and the lessons from nature.

the interment. The wilder setting reminds guests of our place in nature's cycles.

This type of interment can take place with no vault and either a biodegradable urn or no container at all. Knowing that the body will be able to completely return to the soil lends a new, old meaning to the phrase "ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

Participants are reminded that dying is a step in rejoining the earth's cycles, the way nature has always handled it. A soil amendment to correct the pH of the remains can also be used, which turns the ashes into nourishing soil that we can feel good about giving back to the environment.

Biodiversity & Maintenance

Along with the materials being biodegradable, what can really make a cremation burial "green" is the planting and maintenance plan. Using native plants to restore natural habitat turns the final resting place into an atmospheric carbon sink and an oasis for critical biodiversity. Reduced mowing and irrigation is also kinder on our utilities footprint!

A cemetery always gives a sense of place, but this type of restoration habitat setting gives additional context and meaning to the burial. The family and visitors can see and

interact with the beneficial plantings and pollinators that thrive in the natural burial ground. Knowing that their end-of-life budget is covering not just disposition, but also benefits an earth-friendly project, helps them feel included with the story of the site.

Their memorial visits become lessons in nature's timeless, regenerative abundance. They know the decision to bury will always be a good thing because it protects a critical natural resource for future generations.

Countless contributors to these pages have described (and many hours of our continuing education time have been spent on) the value of interment for cremation. We know well the importance of a permanent solution, of perpetual care, of having a place to visit to pay a respect.

We know that the act of burial is a time-honored ritual, which invites participants to move through bereavement in a healthy way. Cemetery interment for cremated remains offers these benefits in contrast to the downsides of bringing urns home or scattering them—the impermanence, the uncertain stewardship, and the dead-end anonymity.

But no matter how well the cemetery professional understands these lessons, our cremation culture still sends remains

DID YOU KNOW?

The ICCFA pays a retainer so that all members in good standing can benefit from telephone consultations on:

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- labor relations and
- human resources management.

IF YOU'VE GOT QUESTIONS, CONTACT

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