

# Burials in the Year 2013 and Beyond

By: David Shanteau, Executive Director, Ohio Cemetery Foundation

Our world is changing rapidly and many of the procedures and policies for making burials have changed as well. This article will provide an overview of new procedures and explore ideas like “green burial.”

## Authorization for Burial

The opening and closing of graves is a normal daily process for all cemeteries. Of course, each time a grave is opened liabilities are created. Besides the safety of the cemetery employees and visitors who may get close to an open hole, there is another important issue of concern - is the cemetery opening the right grave?

Accidents happen and it is possible to open the wrong grave at your cemetery. Besides the importance of having multiple township employees verify the grave's location and layout, it is recommended that all cemeteries implement the use of an Interment, Inurnment Authorization Form. This form identifies the grave to be opened and provides an area on the form whereby the responsible party for the deceased executes the document.

When graves have been pre-purchased, and as soon as practically possible, before the grave is opened by the

responsible party for the burial of the deceased should meet the cemetery sexton at the cemetery grave location. The sexton should identify the grave to be opened

and receive the approval for the opening to take place. This responsible parties approval is given via the Interment, Inurnment Authorization Form.

## Cemetery Minimum Maintenance Guidelines

Ohio Revised Code Section 4767.06(H) stipulates that the Ohio Cemetery Dispute Resolution Commission is obligated with the responsibility to adopt and publish suggested maintenance guidelines for all cemeteries in the State of Ohio. These guidelines are available at [www.com.ohio.gov](http://www.com.ohio.gov). Included in these guidelines are:

1. Definitions for common cemetery terms;
2. Guidelines for the care of the cemetery grounds and structures; and
3. Management/maintenance of rules, regulations and records.

## Up to Date Cemetery Rules and Regulations

Every Ohio cemetery is obligated to have and make available a set of rules and

regulations by Ohio Revised Code Section 517.06. Hopefully your cemetery rules and regulations are up to date and speak to the vital issues for the operation of your

cemetery. Rules and regulations are the playbook by which the cemetery and its clients must conduct themselves in the relationship and provide

protection of each other's rights and responsibilities within the cemetery. Ultimately, rules and regulations help maintain the beauty and serenity of the cemetery.

The vital issues that a cemetery's rules and regulations should include but are not limited to:

1. Definitions of common cemetery terms;
2. The cemetery's right to enforce their rules and regulations;
3. The cemetery's right to correct errors;
4. That all fees for interment rights and opening and closings be paid prior to the burial;
5. That the owner of the interment or inurnment right receives a deed or certificate of ownership;
6. All work within the cemetery grounds must be accomplished by cemetery employees or those assigned by the cemetery;
7. Authorization and selection of the grave to complete the burial;
8. Designation of the proper forms be completed for any disinterment or disinurnment; and
9. Flower regulations.

## 2nd Interment Right

When a customer of your cemetery initially purchased a right of interment, they purchased one right of burial. As time has passed, the owners of this one interment right may wish for the remains of other individuals to be placed on this same grave for which one interment right was purchased. This means for each subsequent burial right that is to





purchase of an interment right, columbarium niches are purchased in perpetuity.

**Green Burial**

Green burial is a very simple form of burial that is occurring in a few of Ohio's cemeteries. A green burial occurs without the deceased being embalmed and most often occurs with a biodegradable casket or simply without one. Green burial advocates state that this burial is a way of caring for the dead with minimal environmental impact that furthers the conservation of natural resources, reduces carbon emissions, protects cemetery maintenance employee's health and promotes the restoration and/or preservation of the cemetery grounds.

The size of the green burial grave could be as large as 10' x 20' feet or may be similar to a family lot in your cemetery. The grave depth is usually 3.5 feet. The depth of this grave ensures that the remains are undisturbed and will decompose quickly. Vaults are not used and the soil is mounded over the grave. The graves are usually leveled several times in the course of a year as the natural decomposition of the remains occurs.

It is important to note that green burial sections are not maintained as other sections of the cemetery. These sections will not permit heavy equipment such as backhoes, trucks, utility vehicles or mowers to transport over the graves. A 10-foot pathway at the foot of each row of graves will permit this equipment to enter the section for the maintenance and digging of the graves. Wild flowers, shrubs or perennials are usually planted over the rows of graves to maintain the natural integrity so often associated with a green burial cemetery section.

*David Shanteau is the executive director of the Ohio Cemetery Foundation. Information about the foundation may be found at [www.ohiocemeteryfoundation.org](http://www.ohiocemeteryfoundation.org). David can be reached at: 888.591.9002 (phone); 888.591.9003 (fax) or [david\\_shanteau@ohiocemeteryfoundation.org](mailto:david_shanteau@ohiocemeteryfoundation.org).*

be used, an additional interment or inurnment right should be sold. A common price for these additional rights would be 50 percent of the current value of the right of interment. The cemetery's rules and regulations should specify how many interment or inurnment rights should be allowed on each grave.

**Cremation Scattering Garden**

A scattering garden is a location that is set aside within a cemetery that is used for the spreading or broadcasting of cremated remains. This garden may be an area in the cemetery that will not normally be used for interment or inurnment rights but would benefit from the addition of a beautiful garden containing attractive bushes or flowers. Four inches of mulch should be added once all of the plantings are complete. The procedure to complete a scattering would consist of an area within the garden of six square feet that has been raked clear of mulch. The cremated remains are removed from the container in which they were delivered to the cemetery and are

mixed with or placed on top of the soil where the mulch was removed. It is important to understand that these cremated remains are placed on a commingled basis and are non-recoverable. The previously cleared mulch may now be replaced into the open area.

**Columbarium**

A columbarium (see photo on previous page) is similar to a mausoleum, but instead of spaces for caskets, a columbarium has spaces called niches for urns which contain cremated remains. Each niche may be personalized by family members and friends, and may often include photographs, trinkets and mementos to commemorate the life of the deceased. These items may be placed inside the niche as the available space allows. Niches usually contain one cubic foot of interior space for one set of cremated remains.

A columbarium is most often located within a cemetery. Columbariums are usually constructed of granite and placed on a previously poured concrete pad in the cemetery. As in the