

# FAMILY GUIDELINES TO BURIAL AND MAINTENANCE OF GRAVES

Morris Orchard Natural Burial is dedicated to the preservation of the orchards for future generations and to help plant adjacent areas with new orchards and future forests. Every burial supports a lasting legacy and also the land and surrounding ecosystems. All plantings are designed and done by the Morris Orchard.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT US AT:



**MORRIS ORCHARD**  
— NATURAL BURIAL —

9434 Bethel Road (office)

9489 Pear Lane (burial ground)

Frederick, MD 21702

(864) 324-2647 (cell)

[jane@morrisorchardnaturalburial.com](mailto:jane@morrisorchardnaturalburial.com)



Losing a loved one can be a challenging experience for families. Having the ability to outline one's wishes for death care can ease the uncertainty of what to do and who to contact. It allows for the creation of a ceremony that genuinely reflects a person's life, celebrating their legacy while offering comfort to those they leave behind. Planning these arrangements in advance provides an opportunity for open conversations with family members, ensuring everyone is prepared to honor those wishes. Assistance is available to help individuals prepare for a natural burial now, ensuring their preferences are clearly understood and respected.

### WHAT IS NATURAL BURIAL?

Natural burial is an eco-conscious approach to honoring the dead, designed to minimize environmental impact. It focuses on conserving natural resources, reducing carbon emissions, protecting worker health, and restoring or preserving natural habitats. Designed to be a tranquil sanctuary, the Orchard features

### BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR A NATURAL BURIAL

- No concrete, plastic or fiberglass vaults
- No embalming
- Allow only biodegradable caskets, shrouds or urns
- Avoids the use of toxic chemicals or metal
- No Fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides
- Natural stone grave marker laid flat



Burial within 3 days from the time of death is recommended

*Times longer than a day are possible if:*

- A funeral home is used that has a cooler
- A coroner's office has cold storage available
- A hospital will allow the deceased to stay in the morgue or will release the body to the family for a home funeral
- The family chooses cooling methods such as dry ice or Techni-Ice

We honor the understanding that death is not an emergency and that time can be taken with our loved ones before burial.

### BURIAL CONTAINERS:

- Shrouds are an inexpensive, simple and even elegant option; some use family quilts or other textiles
- Street clothing with a face covering
- Caskets must be biodegradable—willow, plain wood, mushroom/hemp, or cardboard cremation caskets
- No vaults or grave liners are used
- It is legal for families to provide their own containers

# THE MORRIS ORCHARD NATURAL BURIAL FUNERAL EXPERIENCE

## HOW TO PREPARE

- To find Morris Orchard Natural Burial, use Google Maps for 9489 Pear Lane, Frederick, MD.
- Please carpool if expecting more than 20 cars; the parking at Morris Orchard is limited.
- There are no restroom facilities on site.
- Dress appropriately, especially with regard to shoes, which should be flat walking shoes, not high heels. The weather can be very hot (upper 90's) and bitterly cold (we do get snow and ice). Check the weather on the day of the funeral. Morris Orchard reserves the right to reschedule or delay funerals in the event of severe, dangerous weather.
- Consider an umbrella for protection from the sun or rain.
- Those with difficulty walking can notify the staff and request help getting to the grave site.
- During warm weather, there are insects, so please come prepared with repellent (natural ones preferred).
- Some of the walkways and trails are uneven, so a walking stick could be desirable. Especially in hot weather, bring water.
- Respect Morris Orchard as a communal cemetery. No smoking; remove your trash; keep pets on leash and remove their waste..
- Family and friends are welcomed to bring foods as part of their celebration. We have tables in the Woodland Sanctuary for placing snacks, foods and drinks. We do ask that biodegradable plates and cups are brought to minimize impact.
- Please do not bring sprays of flowers containing metal, plastic or glass tubes or other difficult-to-recycle materials. We recommend local, organic (biodegradable) flower options.

Here are some suggestions:



<https://solandbloom.com/>



<https://perennialclayandgarden.com/>



<https://www.twobootsfarm.com/>



## WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE SERVICE:

- Upon arrival, family and friends can gather by the trees next to the parking area or in the woodland sanctuary area. Staff will direct you to one of these areas, depending on the family's wishes.
- Some families choose to have a procession beginning by the trees near the parking area to the graveside; others might have the casket in the woodland sanctuary or on the grave for lowering, or already lowered into the grave. A few families prefer for the grave to already be closed.
- The woodland sanctuary is a simple clearing in the woods just off the orchard access lane with a large fire ring and simple seating. An intimate but rustic space for gathering or for silent reflection.
- Families can choose to have a service in the woodland sanctuary and/or at the gravesite itself.
- In the case of a procession to the gravesite, attendees can choose to walk behind a hearse or hand pulled cart carrying the deceased.
- The body/casket is placed on temporary wooden slats laid across the grave.
- Some families have a brief graveside service, with words, music and prayers. Pallbearers then raise the casket or shroud with straps as a staff member removes the slats, and the body is lowered into the grave. At that time, some final prayer or memories are offered. The family and friends can then put a scoop of earth or drop flowers into the grave.
- If the family does not have enough willing and able-bodied persons to help with transport or lowering, our staff will assist in placing the body/casket into the grave.
- Families are allowed to, but are not required, to help close the grave. Those with back conditions, heart problems, etc., should not participate. The closure is done with the deeper clay going in first and then the topsoil, then any plants rescued from the site.
- Some families and friends want to stay until the grave is closed; others choose to leave after the lowering and final words. All are welcome to walk around the orchard or sit in the woodland chapel, and all are welcome to visit again in the future.
- Morris Orchard Natural Burial is open dawn till dusk.



## MORE DETAILS

### GRAVE MARKERS

To mark the grave, Morris Orchard Natural Burial will install an engraved stone that will include name, date of birth, and date of death. There is a pallet of local stone at the Orchard to choose from. For an additional fee, we can include a short inscription. Engravings happen post burial and can take up to 2-4 weeks. You can also choose to have no marker – the information will automatically be entered into our database with the location identified by GIS coordinates so there will be a permanent record.

## HIRING FUNERAL HOME PROFESSIONALS

When speaking with a funeral home, inform them that you are having a natural or green funeral, with no embalming. Ask them if they have a cooler or refrigeration unit. It is legal for you to provide your own casket or shroud when working with a funeral home. We are happy to furnish a list of local funeral homes or talk with a funeral home of your choice if you need our assistance or if they need some additional information.

Home funerals are also an option should a family choose to handle the process themselves or with the support of a death dula.

[You can learn more about home funerals here](#) | [And contact for death dulas here](#)

## TRANSPORTATION

It is legal to transport a deceased person who is not embalmed across state lines and to the other side of the world, if necessary. We can arrange for transportation of the deceased through our local funeral home. This avoids charges from tow mortuaries for what is called forwarding and receiving.

Many of our clients just use the funeral home for paperwork, pick up, storage, and delivery to the preserve. Remember there could be an extra charge for transportation, depending on how far you live from the funeral home. If you are coming from a great distance or another state, you might want to transport the deceased yourself. Funeral homes require additional charges by the mile for transportation out of their pick-up area. You can hire the funeral home to do the paperwork and get the permits, and then take responsibility for the driving. Most caskets can fit in a minivan, or you could rent one. This does take more planning, so it might be more convenient for the funeral home to provide the service for you. The choice is yours.

It is also possible to fly people without embalming all over the world. Inman is the name of one company that provides shipping services, but they will not deal with individuals, only funeral homes. Our nearest airports are Washington Dulles and Baltimore Washington International, both about 1 hour away.

## BURYING PETS

Many of our clients have animals that have become an integral part of their family, and the death of these pets is heartbreaking. Pet cremains can be buried with loved ones at the time when the grave is opened. We do not open a gravesite for the internment of a pet on its own.

## SCATTERING OF CREMATED REMAINS

The term scattering suggests an open-air release, but it is also used for in-ground burial of cremated remains. Many of our cremated remains burials are of loved ones who chose cremation at some point in the past and whose family is now looking for a more environmentally congruent final resting place. Morris Orchard only allows for buried cremated remains - there is no scattering meadow.

When burying cremated remains, we first remove any leaf matter, then the superficial root mat called duff, followed by the removal of a small amount of soil. We then mix the removed soil with a proven enzyme buffer that will further reduce the calcium phosphate and sodium of the cremated remains. That mixture is then spread prior to replacing the forest floor layers.