

# **Fernwood Cemetery**

## **Green Burial Section Rules**

(Commission Approved XXX XXX)

### **Purpose and Intent**

Green Burial Sections of the Fernwood Cemetery are dedicated to serving individuals and families who desire a natural burial, one in which they can return their bodies to the earth in an ecologically sustainable manner and where the burial grounds will be perpetually maintained as a natural woodland forest.

To honor these intentions, the rules for Green Burial Sections are very different from the conventional burial sections. Gladstone is committed to maintaining and managing the Green Burial Sections in the manner described by these rules, and burial space owners and their families are responsible for knowing and understanding these rules for funeral planning, burial, and memorialization.

While the City of Gladstone reserves the right to revise these rules if future circumstances should require changes, all due consideration will be given to respect the interests of space holders, the collective concerns of city residents, and the intention of keeping all rules consistent with sound principles of natural burial, ecological sustainability, and woodland forest grounds.

### **All Burial and Memorial Materials Must be Natural.**

As detailed in subsequent rules, all burial and memorial materials must be natural and biodegradable. Burial space owners and their families should pre-plan carefully with their funeral director to assure compliance at the time of burial. They are also encouraged to select materials, including permanent grave markers, that are local, organic, and/or sustainable in origin.

It is understood that some natural burials will include non-biodegradable medical implants. Except where removal is required by law, the choice of inclusion or removal of internal, non-natural medical components is at the discretion of the space owner and his/her family.

The Green Burial Section is intended for full body, non-toxic natural burials that will experience natural decomposition and cremains. Conventionally embalmed bodies are not permitted.

### **General Maintenance of Green Burial Sections**

Green Burial Sections will be generally maintained as natural woodland forest, as follows:

- Trees will be minimally managed to assure their best health and natural life cycles, including allowing leaves, branches, and deadfalls to decompose naturally. Diseased trees may be treated or removed to protect the health of the forest.
- No grass or ground covers will be planted, mowed, or otherwise maintained or permitted.
- Leaves will not be raked or removed, but instead allowed to decompose and naturally build the forest soil.
- Growth of native forest ground cover plants will be allowed to happen naturally.

## **Maintenance/Care of Individual Spaces**

Individual spaces must also be maintained as natural woodland forest. Space owners and their families are expected to support the ecosystem in the following ways:

- Except when required by law (e.g., flags for veterans), all grave decorations and non-permanent memorials must be natural, biodegradable, and not significantly detract from the natural woodland forest setting of the burial ground. Items not in compliance will be removed by cemetery staff. Please ask cemetery staff for permission to place any items that may be objectionable due to their size or nature.
- Leaf litter and normal forest debris must be allowed to accumulate on top of graves to build the soil and support natural decomposition.
- No grass, shrubs, trees, plants, or permanent flowers may be planted on graves.
- Growth of native forest ground cover plants must be allowed to happen naturally on graves.
- Recently filled graves will simply be recovered with their existing leaf litter and may be left with a mound of soil on top to allow for settling over time.
- Sunken graves may be refilled up to ground level to assure pedestrian safety.

## **Permanent Monuments/Grave Markers**

Except when required by law, permanent grave markers in Green Burial lots are optional and neither encouraged nor discouraged. They are permitted as follows:

- All permanent monuments/markers must be flush with the ground.
- Only one marker is allowed per burial space, no larger than 2ft. x 3ft. in size.
- Markers will not be maintained by cemetery staff and may eventually be covered by the forest soil. However, families are permitted to maintain them for as long as they wish.
- It is recommended that lot owners and families consider using materials that are as local and/or sustainable in origin as possible.

## **Burial Preparations and Materials**

Because natural burial is significantly different from conventional burial and requires much tighter time and material constraints, it is essential that burial space owners plan with their funeral director and fully communicate the rules for burial preparation and materials to their family and friends.

The following rules will apply:

- Green Burial Section lots are generally intended for non-embalmed bodies, but bodies embalmed with certified green/non-toxic/biodegradable fluids are permitted. Be sure to pre-plan carefully with your funeral director to determine if green embalming is likely to be needed and prepare accordingly.
- No vaults or grave liners of any kind are permitted.
- Sturdy containers for burials (untreated wood coffins, wicker or grass baskets, bamboo, or cardboard boxes, etc.) must be made of biodegradable materials. To minimize settling/sinking of graves, it is recommended that they be appropriately sized for the body with minimal empty space inside.
- Solid/sturdy containers must fit easily within the standard grave hole size of 3ft. X 7ft.
- Shroud burials using wrappings such as cloth, blankets, or quilts are permitted when they are made of biodegradable materials (but see special procedures/rules below regarding shroud burials).
- Conventionally embalmed (toxic) bodies are not permitted in Green Burial Sections. However, at the discretion of the Sexton, an exception may be made to this rule only when all the following four criteria apply:
  - The deceased already owned a lot in a Green Burial Section and had filed plans with his/her funeral director detailing clear intentions for a natural burial.

- The deceased has a life partner or spouse who is already interred in an adjacent lot and the intention was to be buried alongside one another.
- The body of the deceased conventionally embalmed outside of the control of the deceased, his/her family, or representatives (generally when ordered by authorities or required by law, such as embalming in the case of a body that could not be readily identified).
- The conventional embalming of the body is not the result of elective changes in burial plans by the lot owner or his/her family, family disagreements, lack of prior planning, or other controllable circumstances.

Furthermore:

- All other natural burial rules apply, such as all biodegradable materials and no vaults.

### **Standard Burial/Interment Procedures (Warm Weather Season)**

During warm weather conditions (i.e., not winter), the following rules apply to opening/closing of graves and interment of bodies:

- The standard grave hole size will be 3 ft. x 7 ft. For burials requiring larger grave holes, advance notice to the Sexton is required.
- Grave depth will be in the range of 3 to 4 feet, at the discretion of the Sexton but respecting the desire for natural burials to be no deeper than necessary.
- Only cemetery staff will be permitted to dig graves and will use a backhoe and/or other machinery as needed.
- Because natural burials are vault-less, during periods of rain or wet snow cemetery staff and funeral directors will do their best to keep water from pooling in graves prior to burial but cannot guarantee complete dryness.
- Open grave sites will be "natural" in appearance at the time of burial. This means that grave soil will be piled openly on site, the forest floor and pathways may be uneven, wet, and/or muddy, and attendees must dress accordingly.
- Because section roadways are unpaved and inaccessible to hearses and ordinary passenger vehicles, delivery of burials to graveside will require capable pallbearers and/or alternative vehicles (e.g., 4-wheel drive trucks). Families and funeral directors are also responsible for addressing any/all accessibility needs of attendees.
- Burials employing just shrouds or insufficiently sturdy containers will require strapping the body to a trundle board for interment. Funeral directors are responsible for providing trundle boards and assuring that they are of appropriate size and strength and will easily fit into the standard grave hole size of 3 ft. x 7 ft. Trundle boards will remain in the grave at burial unless they can be easily and respectfully removed.
- Interment of all burials into graves will be conducted by cemetery staff using conventional equipment.
- Graves may be filled in by hand by attendees.

### **Special Rules for Winter Burial**

Wintertime burials are permitted in Green Burial Sections at additional costs, and every effort will be made to facilitate such burials when needed. However, given the tight timeframes for natural burial, City of Gladstone cannot 100% guarantee this service in a timely manner. Space owners and their families should work closely with their funeral director to make clear plans that allow fast action in wintertime, and to plan for contingency measures that can be employed when delays are encountered, such as green embalming, freezing, or other methods of non-toxic preservation until burial is possible.

- During winter months, cemetery roads beyond the vault will not be plowed for passenger vehicles/hearses; and only clear enough snow for equipment access and delivery of burial to graveside with a 4-wheel drive vehicle.
- For attendee access to graveside families and funeral directors should assess current conditions and prepare with appropriate winter gear/equipment.
- In times of extreme winter weather, it may be necessary to disallow hand filling of graves and expedite the process with machinery.
- When bodies embalmed with certified green/non-toxic/biodegradable fluids must be stored in the winter for any reason or length of time, they will be enclosed in an additional container to assure health and safety.

# Fernwood Cemetery Green Burial Section Rules

\*\*\*\*\* Agreement \*\*\*\*\*

By signing below, I attest that I have received and read the above rules, procedures, and recommendations that govern my space(s) in the Green Burial Sections of Fernwood Cemetery and I agree to all terms as specified.

Space(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Primary Owner, Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Phone and Address: \_\_\_\_\_

(Date) \_\_\_\_\_

-----

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Additional Owner, Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Phone and Address: \_\_\_\_\_

(Date) \_\_\_\_\_

-----

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Additional Owner, Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Phone and Address: \_\_\_\_\_

(Date) \_\_\_\_\_