

Natural Burial

Why we care

We make choices every day in the way we eat, shop, travel, and where we choose to live that can have big impacts on our environment. Our planning today for how we will be handled when we or our loved ones die can have a big impact too. Traditional burial practices entail embalming with formaldehyde (a carcinogen), lacquered or metal caskets to preserve the body, and concrete vaults to stabilize the ground—all of which require land that cannot be used for anything else. Cremation uses large amounts of energy and releases air pollutants including greenhouse gasses and mercury. Cemeteries are often heavily manicured and treated with chemical fertilizers and herbicides. But there are more natural alternatives.

Simple, positive steps

- Choose a biodegradable casket or burial shroud.
 - [A Fine Farewell](#), based in Portland, creates handmade shrouds.
 - [Natural Burial Co.](#) sells shrouds, wicker caskets, and biodegradable coffins.
- Locate a natural burial site.
 - White Eagle Memorial Preserve near Goldendale, Washington is certified as a Conservation Burial Ground, the only one in the Pacific Northwest.
 - Gibson Cemetery, about 5 miles west of Estacada, has a few gravesites in a forest. Call 503-730-0142.
 - Mt. Calvary Catholic Cemetery and Riverview Cemetery in SW Portland, allow burial in biodegradable caskets.
- Consider a home burial.
 - State law allows burial of family member on property you own, but local government may have restrictions. See a fact sheet by the [Oregon Cemetery and Mortuary Board](#) or call 971-673-1500.

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at jeanne@earthleaders.org.