Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a nature preserve cemetery?

A nature preserve cemetery bears little resemblance to a conventional cemetery. There are no manicured lawns or rows of headstones. Foxfield Preserve is a nature preserve first. Trails meander through forest and prairie and naturalists are restoring the site by planting native prairie grasses, wildflowers, and trees.

A typical cemetery will have over 1,000 burials per acre. At Foxfield Preserve, we will have only 100 or 200 burials per acre.

2. What type of burials will be permitted at Foxfield Preserve?

We will have only natural burials (also referred to as "green burial"). This is how most people were buried throughout the ages. The use of concrete vaults and embalming are relatively new concepts, becoming popular the U.S. Civil War times.

In a natural burial a person is laid to rest in a biodegradable container such as a wooden casket, shroud, or cardboard cremation container. They are not embalmed and no vaults are used. It is the true "dust to dust" form of burial. Foxfield Preserve suggests dressing the body in natural fibers such as cotton or wool.

3. Is natural (green) burial legal?

Yes.

Most of what you may think is law is either rules of individual cemeteries or common practices assumed to be legal requirements. There is no law that a vault must be used but many cemeteries require this for ease of maintenance and closer spacing. Embalming is only required under rare circumstances (A few states require embalming if a body is transported by common carrier or won't be buried within a certain amount of time).

4. Doesn't embalming preserve a body for all time?

No. It only slows decomposition for a short time.

5. Can I have a viewing if the body is not embalmed?

This is something to discuss with your funeral director. Policies for viewing unembalmed remains vary from funeral home to funeral home. Refrigeration and dry ice are methods of temporary preservation that some funeral homes are willing to allow.

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Ph 330.763.1331 • Fax 330.359.7898 • foxfield@wildernesscenter.org
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6. Can we bury or scatter cremated remains?

Yes. Foxfield Preserve will accept cremation remains. Parts of the preserve are limited to interment of cremated remains. If someone wishes to simply scatter ashes, there will be a cost for locating and record keeping. There are areas of Foxfield Preserve designated for ashes. Over the years many people have scattered the ashes of loved ones at The Wilderness Center.

7. What type of grave markers will be permitted?

Grave markers are permitted but optional. Markers must be a natural stone, such as granite or high-quality sandstone. They cannot be polished and should have the appearance of natural stone. They may be engraved. Stones must lie flat on the ground, cannot extend more than 3 inches above the ground and should not exceed 216 sq inches (12” x 18”) of surface area.

8. How large are the plots at Foxfield Preserve?

The plots at Foxfield Preserve are much larger than those at a conventional cemetery. Our plots are 10-feet X 20-feet and are suitable for the interment of one casket, one casket and one cremated remains, or two cremated remains.

9. How deep are graves?

Graves are 3.5 ft deep (six feet under is a bit of a myth). Since vaults are not used the soil is mounded over the grave. It is usually level again in about a year. This depth ensures that remains are undisturbed and return quickly to nature. Organic material such as leaves and twigs may be mixed with soil when graves are closed to facilitate site restoration.

10. Will animals disturb the gravesites?

No. Burial is one of the oldest technologies. It is truly a prehistoric technology. Animals simply do not dig into graves. Ramsey Creek, a nature preserve cemetery in South Carolina, has a wild boar population and black bears and they have never had any problem. This is one of those “old-wives-tale” myths popular in scary stories.

11. Will a nature preserve cemetery hurt water quality?

No. Natural land produces cleaner water than urban, suburban, or agricultural areas. The forest and prairie watershed at Foxfield Preserve will provide cleaner water for the Sugar Creek watershed. Modern burial vaults have drains.

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12. Can my family dig the grave?

No. Hand digging a grave is very hard labor and requires skill few people possess. Family and friends are welcome to close the grave. Families who have closed graves have found it to be a powerful experience. The Cemetery Steward will be on hand quietly supervise a closing.

13. May we have a funeral at The Wilderness Center?

Graveside services are welcome at Foxfield Preserve. The Wilderness Center Interpretive Building is a not funeral home. Indoor services are best handled by professionals or the family. Rooms at the Interpretive Building may be available to rent for meals or receptions following interment. Families often enjoy holding a memorial in a Wilderness Center picnic shelter during good weather when everyone can see Foxfield Preserve and enjoy walking the trails.

14. Is natural (green) burial against anyone's religion?

Considering the diversity of religious beliefs that is a tough question. It does not conflict with any major religions. Some faiths require it. Natural burial is in keeping with the most ancient burial traditions.

15. How will the cemetery be maintained?

Remember, it is a nature preserve so there will be very little maintenance compared to a typical lawn-type cemetery. The trails will be maintained to provide easy access to the site and hazardous trees will be removed. If Foxfield Preserve looks like a conventional cemetery, we have failed. It will look like forest and prairie.

16. How will families locate gravesites at Foxfield Preserve?

Ohio Law requires Foxfield Preserve to keep careful records of precise burial locations. These records will be kept on paper and electronically. Interment sites can be located precisely by measurements from survey pins. GPS coordinates are recorded for every gravesite; hand held GPS units usually track to about 15-feet at Foxfield Preserve. Even without a memorial stone, the gravesite can be located.

17. Can I plant a tree or flower on my plot?

A native tree or wildflower may be planted on certain sites. Plantings must coincide with our site restoration goals and be suitable for the site. The steward has an approved species list and can help with choosing a memorial planting.

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18. How can I purchase a site at Foxfield Preserve?

You can contact the Foxfield Preserve Steward by calling 330-763-1331, or click the "contact us" portion on the Foxfield Preserve website: http://www.foxfieldpreserve.org. You can arrange for a visit to the site or the Steward can help you select a site if you are unable to visit.

19. How can I learn more about natural (green) burial?

You can visit http://www.greenburialcouncil.org/. This is an organization creating standards and benchmarks for cemeteries and funeral homes offering natural burial. Those organizations meeting their standards can receive certification and approved provider status.

http://www.memorialecosystems.com — This is the website for the first nature preserve cemetery in the U.S. They provided invaluable insight and advice to The Wilderness Center about starting Foxfield Preserve.

http://www.Foxfieldpreserve.org — to learn more about the nature preserve cemetery operated by The Wilderness Center.

Consider reading the book **Grave Matters** by Mark Harris. The book provides information and insight into a growing movement focusing on natural burials.