



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.

2. What type of burials are permitted at Foxfield Preserve?

We allow only natural burials (also referred to as “green burial”). 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. Foxfield Preserve requests dressing the body in natural fibers such as cotton or wool. The goal is to embrace the natural cycle of life and limit our environmental impact on the earth. It is the true “dust to dust” form of burial. This is how most people were buried throughout the ages. The use of concrete vaults and embalming are relatively new concepts, only becoming popular in the U.S. during the Civil War.

3. Is natural (green) burial legal?

Yes. Most of what you may think is law is either rules of individual cemeteries or common practice. There is no law that a vault must be used, though 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.

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 are areas of Foxfield Preserve designated for scatterings.

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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, to lessen our impact on the landscape. Our plots are 10-feet X 20-feet and are suitable for the interment of one casket, one casket and one set of cremated remains, or two sets of 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.

10. Will animals disturb the gravesites?

No. Burial is one of the oldest technologies. 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.

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.

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 Steward will be on hand to supervise and assist with each closing.

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

All graveside services are welcome at Foxfield Preserve. However, the Wilderness Center's Interpretive Building does not host funerals. 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?

Natural burial is in keeping with the most ancient burial traditions. While it is difficult to say for sure, we know that natural burial does not conflict with any major religions and is a requirement for some faiths.

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.

18. How can I learn more about natural burial and Foxfield Preserve?

You may attend one of our monthly informational sessions offered at The Wilderness Center, or call our Steward to arrange a meeting. For further information about the natural burial movement, we suggest visiting the Green Burial Council's website, greenburialcouncil.org, or reading the book "Grave Matters" by Mark Harris.