

GREEN FUNERALS



EASY STEP BY STEP GUIDE

Can a funeral be truly
'green'?

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About me

My name is Laura Carpenter and I am a herbal educator and soul midwife.



I love working with nature in all its forms but I have a particular love of trees, I am a teacher and a guide in the world of plants and mushrooms.

You can find out more about me on my website. www.lauracarpenter.co.uk





What does the term 'green funeral' actually mean?

To most people it conjures up a more nature based setting, maybe a natural burial or a scattering of ashes in nature? A wicker coffin covered in wild flowers?

These all fall within that term and actually many people are looking to 'green' their funeral choices, taking into consideration the environmental impact of their death.

According to The Good Funeral Guide (2010) a green funeral is one that fits the following criteria:

- *rejects cremation*
- *opts for burial in a site serving a conservation purpose*
- *creates an environment which is not visually definable as a burial ground*
- *reviles embalming*
- *requires a coffin or shroud locally made from natural, sustainable materials*
- *forbids demarcation of the grave*
- *forbids marking or personalising of the grave with any sort of permanent memorial*
- *forbids tending or gardening of the grave*

Some of these might be quite obvious and things you have already thought about, but others might be a bit more shocking, such as 'not tending or gardening the grave'.

I think it's important when looking at green funeral options to realise that you will only be able to go so far. Some options may not be available in your area and you will of course want to take into account the wishes of the person whose funeral it is.





Burial or cremation?

I could write a book on the stats for this one but while natural burial comes out top on most fronts it may not be possible for many reasons. So if cremation is what the person wants and/or it's the only option then direct cremation is the greener option.

If a the person has been cremated through direct cremation you will probably hold a funeral/memorial service for them. You can do this anywhere and include lots of green elements, such as everyone bringing their favourite flower from their garden and scattering the ashes in a particular place that's special.

Coffin or shroud?

If you're going with a natural burial option you will be governed by the rules of the natural burial ground. They will likely only allow certain materials to be interred, such as wool (shrouds and coffins), cardboard (coffins) and wood (either simply non varnished pine casket style coffins or wicker coffins).

To keep costs down and to reduce the carbon foot print using local suppliers for this is the best option. Certainly you'll find somewhere in the UK to send you whatever you need but if you can get it from a neighbouring county then all the better.

Markers or trees?

In many natural burial grounds no markers are used at all but a tree can be planted in a particular area and this can be a focus for reflection. In some burial grounds they have a particular area for this.

It may be the wish of the person whose funeral it is to have a marker places elsewhere, but do be mindful of it's biodegradability.

Flowers, trees and seeds

As I've mentioned above natural flowers grown at home have a much lower carbon footprint than imported ones. They also don't have the plastic frames that standard imported funeral flowers have.

You may want to offer seeds for each person to take away and plant in their garden, for example wildflower mixes for bees. Or you may want to give a cutting of the person's favourite plant so that each person attending can plant it at home.

Trees can also be given in this way or the person may want a donation to a tree planting charity.



DIY Funeral?

Now this is something that is growing in popularity in the UK but it certainly not for everyone. You can in fact arrange everything yourself and act as the funeral director. Many people choose this option because it offers them more freedom in what they want carried out but it's also a vastly cheaper alternative to a 'standard' funeral.

I mention it here because it is a green option. As you are the controlling of everything you can choose much greener alternatives than your funeral director. Not that there aren't green funeral directors out there because there are now and you can find a list on the Natural Death Centre website.

Where to go from here?

The best thing to do from here is more reading. Hopefully I've started you off on a journey to look at greener alternatives surrounding funerals and some of the things to consider.

I have included some excellent resources with links to their websites and you can read much further into the options you may want to consider.

What I hope you will take away from this eBook is that even doing some of things and being aware of the impacts will make a change and difference to the carbon foot print of the funeral you are planning.

Good luck with your further reading and planning.

Resources

- The Good Funeral Guide (Book and website)

<https://www.goodfuneralguide.co.uk/>

- The Natural Death Centre

<http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk/>

- The Home Funeral Network

<http://www.homefuneralnetwork.org.uk/>

- Soul Midwifery

<https://www.soulmidwives.co.uk/>



