

**Deputation to The Township of Georgian Bluffs Council
presented by Robert Hope on behalf of
Natural Burial for Grey Bruce**

Natural Burial – what is it?

There are 2 components to natural burial: handling of the **body** & the **location** of the plot.
Options available for preparing the body, are designed to deliver the body's nutrients to the environment.

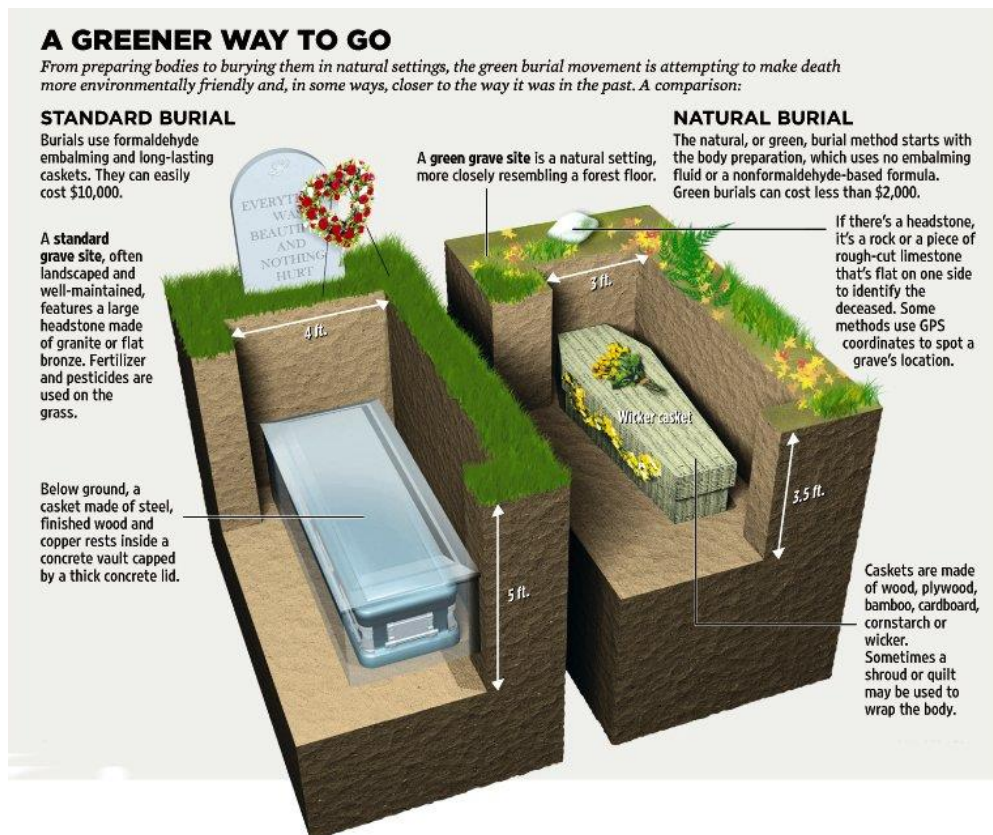
Preparing the body

The handling of the body is likely very similar to what is used in Jewish or Muslim burials. The body is not embalmed, clothing should be natural fibre and a coffin if used is untreated wood. Alternatives such as a shroud or a wicker basket are also possible and all are designed to decompose quickly. The body is placed at a 3-foot depth where the top surface is only propagated from blown in local seeds. This entire process meets existing Ontario laws.

Site location

The site location should be carefully selected to allow the body's nutrients to quickly engage with the surrounding nature around it. Once the body is buried, path maintenance or removing tree branches is usually all that is required while at the same time, encouraging growth of the species of plants around it. Location is important and the more natural and biodiverse the soil and plant life, the more naturally pleasing the burial site becomes.

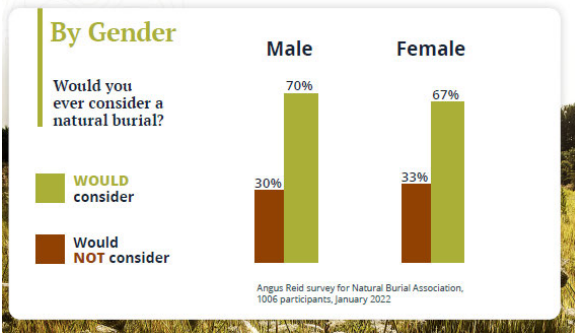
Definition: Natural burial is an environmentally sustainable alternative to existing funeral practices where the body is returned to the earth to decompose naturally and be recycled into new life. The ground cover is native trees, shrubs and flowers without pesticides or herbicides and becomes a protected natural preserve. Natural burial grounds use minimally intrusive markers (trees, shrubs, flat stones) with resting places set within the emerging forest that provide places for visitors to sit.



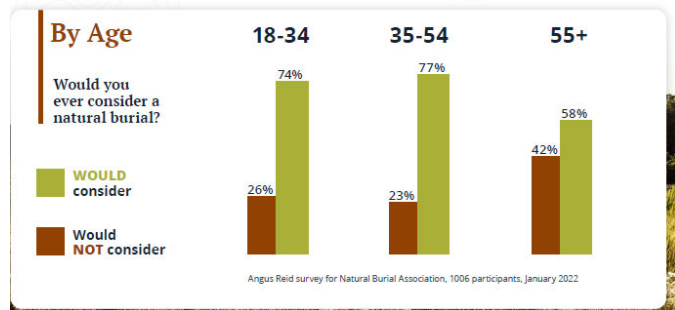
Who wants Natural Burial?

Based on a 2022 Angus Reid survey, 70% of southwest Ontarians would consider natural burial.

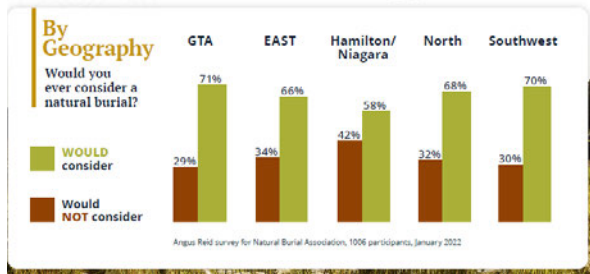
Natural Burial Has Broad Appeal:



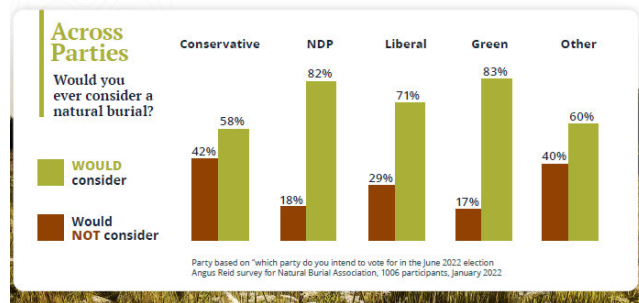
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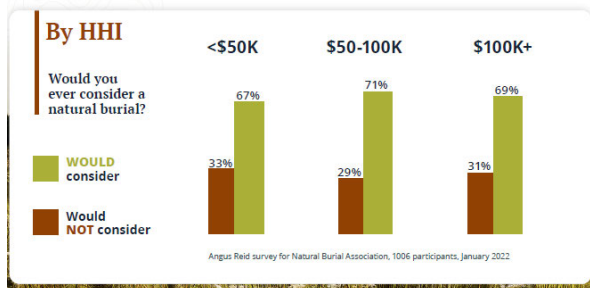
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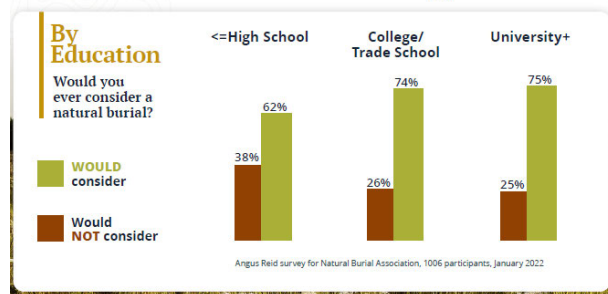
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Why people like natural burial

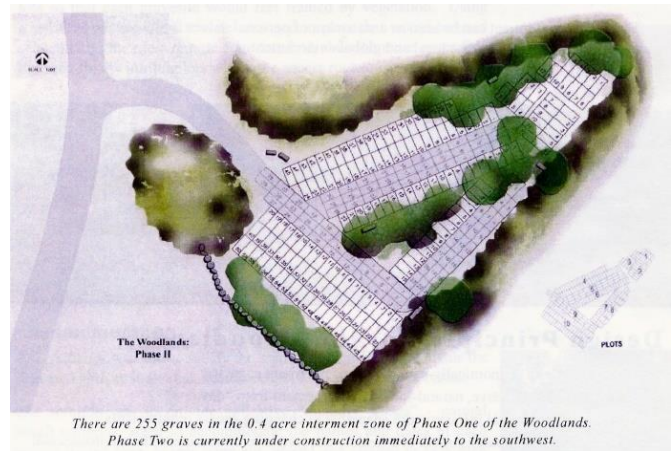
It's not just about being eco-friendly:

- Giving back to nature
- Consistent with faith and traditions
- A final resting place in nature
- Part of the cycle of life
- Leaving a legacy
- Natural & simple
- A nice place to visit
- It's a connection with the land
- It's the eco-friendly option
- Special case for Mount Pleasant – It's close to Legacy Ridge Golf Club

Mount Royal, Victoria BC - used as Best Practices for Natural Burial



Royal Oak Burial Park - Woodlands Natural Burial Section



WOODLANDS – GREEN BURIAL

PHILOSOPHY: Natural or green burial is regarded as a statement of personal values for those who seek to minimize their impact on the local and global environment. Green burial is available at the Burial Park in areas we refer to as WOODLANDS interment zones.

SITE PROTECTION: Woodlands interment zones are a place where individual graves become part of the local natural landscape and contribute to the environmental sustainability of the larger, community eco-system. Every Woodlands natural burial interment zone at the Burial Park - and the natural setting and eco-systems of the Woodlands and the interment sites located therein – are protected in perpetuity and cannot at any future date be converted to a conventional interment zone.

AT-NEED ASSIGNMENT ONLY: To manage and protect the restoration and reforestation process of a Woodlands eco-system, individual lot assignment in the Woodlands is only made on an at-need basis. Purchasers of pre-need interment rights in a Woodlands interment zone do not have a specific Woodlands zone or specific lot assigned to them until the time of the at-need requirement for a lot.

DIRECT EARTH BURIAL: Woodlands burial is an interment practice where human remains are returned to the earth to decompose naturally and contribute to new life. Human remains are prepared for Woodlands burial without embalming and are buried in a Burial Park approved and fully biodegradable casket or alternative container. No form of grave liner is used for Woodlands burial.

MEMORIALIZATION: The Burial Park has installed communal memorial stones for the purpose of making approved memorial inscriptions to commemorate Woodlands interments. Other than the Board installed memorial stones no other memorial marker, monument, edging or other stone, vase, ornament or any other structure is placed on, in or around any lot in a Woodlands interment zone. The Burial Park will remove any memorial product, personal item, decoration or floral tributes which do not comply with Woodlands and Burial Park Rules and Regulations.

PLANTINGS & VISITATION: Approved plantings that are placed at individual Woodlands interment sites coupled with the overall restoration and reforestation of a Woodlands ecosystem are collectively intended to become living memorials to the persons interred in Woodlands zones. As trees and plants mature and become established in Woodlands zones, visitors will be discouraged from seeking out individual graves as this will have a negative impact on the eco-system of the Woodlands. Visitors will be encouraged to use specially established memorial zones for reflection and remembrance.

PERMANENT & IRREVERSIBLE INTERMENT: Woodlands interments must be regarded as permanent and irreversible as a disinterment would be highly disruptive and damaging to the eco-system of the area as it matures. Woodlands disinterment would only be accommodated as ordered under legislation, regulation or a court order.

RULES & REGULATIONS: There are restrictions and limitations on the purchase and exercise of interment rights and on the form of approved memorial in the Woodlands interment zones. Persons who select Woodlands interment are expected, without exception, to comply with the rules and regulations of Woodlands interment zones specifically and the Burial Park generally.



Royal Oak Burial Park - Woodlands Natural Burial Section



Mount Pleasant, Georgian Bluffs

Potential location next to forested area

Potential location – (photos taken at our 16 persons visit a few weeks ago)



Preferred location is adjacent to the west end existing plots.



Possible next actions

Arrange to have a Landscape Designer create a plan that could meet the needs of both Georgian Bluffs and the citizens who requested Natural Burial. We would suggest using Thomas Dean who has designed the Owen Sound Natural Burial site along with the Gichi-Name Wiikwedong Reconciliation Garden.

When you think you have a natural burial plan developing, consider contacting another cemetery manager who has faced similar issues. Ilan played an integral role in the development of the green burial space at Royal Oak in Victoria, which emphasizes ecological restoration and the use of local indigenous plant material.

Contact **Ilan Highton, Executive Director**, Royal Oak Burial Park ilan.highton@robp.ca

Presented by: Robert Hope



Many thanks to Susan Greer, Executive Director of the Natural Burial Association (a Canadian non-profit organization) for her contribution and review of this presentation. [<susan@naturalburialassociation.ca>](mailto:susan@naturalburialassociation.ca)