

HELPING YOU EVERY STEP OF THE WAY



Your Complete Guide to Eco-Friendly Funerals



Dignity Funerals

www.dignityfunerals.co.uk

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If a loved one was environmentally conscious before they died, an eco-funeral may be the perfect option. This document is a complete guide on eco-friendly funerals and will provide you with the information you may need.

Visit [dignityfunerals.co.uk](https://www.dignityfunerals.co.uk) for more advice and information on this topic.

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Introduction

If your loved one was environmentally-conscious before they died, you may want to consider holding an eco-friendly funeral to commemorate them.

You might be wondering what an eco-friendly funeral is. Simply put, it's an alternative to a traditional funeral, incorporating ways to give your loved one a send-off that is as environmentally friendly as possible.

“As people have sought to reduce their environmental impact in life, so too have many looked to do the same in death. Natural burials offer this chance by getting rid of much of the excess traditionally associated with funerals.”

(Independent, July 2019).

This guide will give you all the information you need about eco-friendly funerals, from choosing a burial site, the types of coffin or urn available, and even considerations such as food and transport.





Eco-friendly burial sites

While many cemeteries and churchyards have strict rules and regulations which are in place to make them more environmentally friendly, people are increasingly looking for options that further minimise any potential impact caused by traditional burials.

In the UK, the first natural burial site was opened in Carlisle Cemetery in 1993. Since then, the number has grown hugely to meet demand, with around 260 green burial sites throughout the country - a number that continues to grow.

To recognise these eco-friendly burial sites and their membership with the Association of Natural Burial Grounds, The Natural Death Centre runs The People's Awards for Best Natural Burial Ground in the UK. The winner for 2019/2020 was Old Park Meadow, located in Chelmsford, Essex. See next column for a snapshot of some of the UK's natural burial sites by region:

Region	Site Name
Scotland	Cairnbrae Natural Burial Ground, Kellas, Dundee, Angus
North West	Swanlow Park Cemetery, Winsford, Cheshire
North East	Seven Penny Meadow, Medomsley, County Durham
Yorkshire	Tarn Moor Memorial Woodland, Skipton, North Yorkshire
West Midlands	Fenns Meadow Green Burial Ground, Whitchurch, Shropshire
East Midlands	The Willows Natural Burial Ground, Leicestershire
East	The Arbory Trust Woodland Burial Ground, Barton, Cambridge
South West	Pentiddy Natural Burials, Liskeard, Cornwall
South East	Sheepdrove Burial Wood, Lambourn Downs, Berkshire
London	Woodcock Hill Woodland Cemetery, Rickmansworth

To find out more about the natural, woodland burials we provide, see our [Woodland Burials guide](#).

When choosing an eco-friendly funeral, just as with any other burial site, it's important to consider how the site is maintained. A natural environment calls for maintenance, especially when it comes to preserving greenery. The use of fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides can be detrimental to the landscape. For this reason, most natural burial sites will have strict rules surrounding how they are used. However, it's best to get an understanding of this before choosing a site for your loved one.





Eco-coffins and urns

You may wish for your loved one to be buried in an eco-friendly coffin. With lots of natural materials available, eco coffins are made from materials that have less impact on the environment - either by preserving woodland, reducing plastics or paints and using only biodegradable materials. Many natural burial sites will insist that the coffins used are eco-friendly.

Coffins

An eco-friendly coffin can be made from the following materials:

- Bamboo
- Banana leaf
- Cardboard
- Wool
- Seagrass
- Pandanus
- Coco stick
- Cane
- Water hyacinth

BAMBOO COFFINS

Bamboo is an ideal eco-friendly, renewable material. It produces 30% more oxygen than trees, and when cut, new shoots and seedlings can grow quickly, sometimes between 3 and 10cm per day.

The most commonly-used bamboo for coffin manufacturing is “builders bamboo”, found in Asia. This bamboo is also used for building bridges and houses, due to its structure giving it a favourable strength to weight ratio, which is rumoured to be even stronger than steel.

How is a bamboo coffin made?

Once the bamboo has been cut, the cane can be woven through a solid frame that has been designed to suit sizing requirements. Bamboo coffins can be used for cremation or burials. Most Funeral Directors will charge between £500 and £800 for a bamboo coffin, but this can vary depending on location or size.



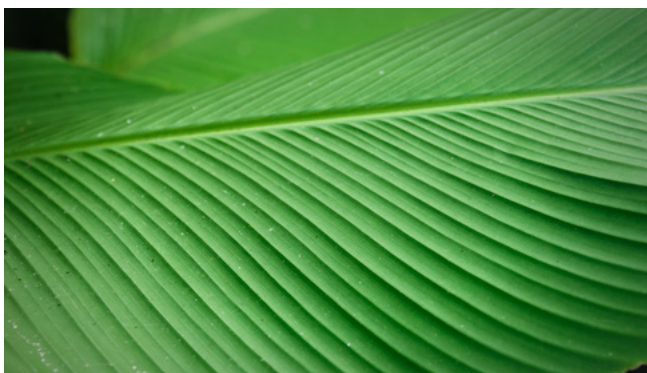


BANANA LEAF COFFINS

Banana leaves are another alternative material for coffin manufacturing. Once the banana plant has fruited, the leaves can be carefully removed and used for a range of different creations.

Yarns of banana leaf are twisted and expertly woven into a rope. Then, these ropes of leaf are threaded through a sturdy timber structure, shaped to suit your requirements. The interiors of banana leaf coffins can be lined with natural materials, while rope handles are fastened to the sides.

Most Funeral Directors will charge between £200 and £700 for banana leaf coffins. The price varies depending on the size of the coffin and the extra design details you may want to choose.



CARDBOARD COFFINS

You may wish to bury your loved one in a cardboard coffin, or even have them cremated in one. Cardboard coffins are 100% biodegradable and are mostly crafted from recycled materials.

Cardboard coffins are not only eco-friendly, but they can be easily decorated with patterns, imagery and other designs that truly reflect your loved one's life. You could even have their coffin covered in a picturesque scene of their birthplace, or somewhere they loved, for example.

The cost of a cardboard coffin will vary depending on the size and design, and if you wanted to add extras such as lining. You can expect to pay between approximately £100 and £500 for a cardboard coffin in the UK.





WOOL COFFINS

In 2012, Guardian writer Helen Nugent released the article **“Rest in fleece: demand soars for woollen coffins”**, which stated:

“Coffins made from British wool fleeces are growing in popularity thanks to an increasing number of Britons choosing to take their commitment to a greener life beyond the grave by planning for an environmentally sound send-off.”

Not only are wool coffins eco-friendly, but they're also a more sensitive option for grieving families. According to The Telegraph, wool coffins are “warm and approachable... comforting”. Wool coffins usually have a recycled cardboard lining, which gives them a sturdier structure for the wool to be attached to. Most are lined with organic cotton and include a waterproof base that's 100% biodegradable.

In terms of pricing, wool coffins cost between £700 and £1,000, depending on the size and design. You can choose to have a personalised woollen nameplate, or even a woollen pattern included.

SEAGRASS COFFINS

Grown in coastal paddy fields watered with seawater, seagrass is an ideal eco-friendly alternative material for coffin manufacturing.

The yarns of seagrass are taken from the paddy fields, which are monitored to ensure a smooth, continuous growth cycle. The yarns are twisted by hand and fitted with cane, fastening them together at each end. This structure is then shaped to create a coffin.

Seagrass coffins are an ideal option if your loved one expressed an interest in the sea but may not have wanted a burial at sea or to have their ashes scattered there. You can expect to pay approximately £400-£600 for a seagrass coffin in the UK.





PANDANUS COFFINS

Pandanus coffins appear like seagrass coffins and can be difficult to tell apart when fully woven.

Where they differ is the material – pandanus is essentially wild pineapple, making it an eco-friendly alternative for coffin manufacturing. The pineapple leaves are woven with rattan, which creates a full biodegradable structure.

You can expect to pay between approximately £500 and £700 for a pandanus coffin.



COCO STICK COFFINS

Coconut palm leaves are a fast growing bi-product of coconut trees, making them a renewable material. That's why they're another alternative to consider for an eco-friendly coffin.

When the coconut palm leaves are cut, they are then dried out before the stems are removed. Removing the stems retains small, sturdy sticks to use for constructing the coco stick coffin. They can be made with sturdy bases and natural cotton lining, and rope handles to make carrying easier.

If you decide for your loved one to be buried in a coco stick coffin, you can expect to pay approximately £500 in the UK. This can vary depending on specifications.





CANE COFFINS

Cane coffins can sometimes be referred to as rattan or wicker and are crafted from rattan that grows within forests like vine. Its fast growth makes it a renewable alternative to traditional coffins.

Cane coffins are usually handcrafted using techniques and methods that herald from traditional basket making. Most rattan is harvested from forests in South East Asia.

When it comes to the cost of a cane coffin, you can expect to pay between £400 and £600.



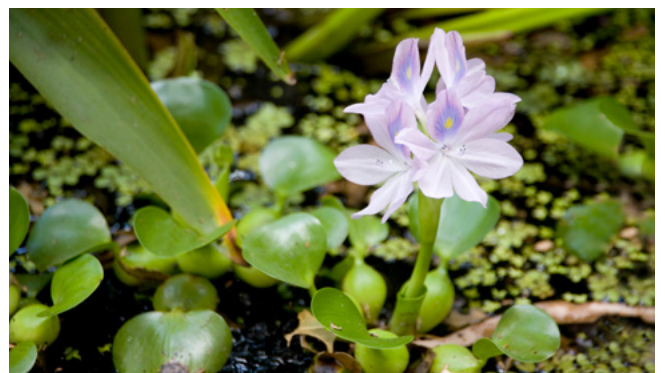
WATER HYACINTH COFFINS

Another alternative to traditional coffins is the water hyacinth coffin.

How are water hyacinth coffins made?

Stems of the water hyacinth plant are harvested, then expertly woven around a wooden frame that gives a sturdy, eco-friendly coffin. You can have natural linings and handles added to the sides if you wish.

Water hyacinth coffins cost between £400 and £600.





Refrigeration or embalming?

If you want to store your loved one's body in an eco-friendly way, refrigeration could be something you discuss with your Funeral Director.

When a body is preserved via refrigeration, it is kept at a constant temperature below 40°F. Throughout the refrigeration process, ice packs, dry ice or even ice gel will be used to keep the body at this temperature.



But why refrigerate a body?

If you want to bury your loved one at an eco-burial site, it's important to remember that these sites won't accept bodies that have been embalmed. Whilst embalming is an effective way to preserve a body in a traditional sense, the chemicals used could cause harm to the environment if they were to leak into the ground.

If refrigeration is something you wish to consider for your loved one, speak with your Funeral Director. They'll be able to discuss this with you in further detail and can provide an idea of any additional costs that may be incurred.





Tree pod burials

The idea of tree pod burials is becoming more and more prominent throughout the world, with many countries starting to include burial pods as an option.

You may have heard of Capsula Mundi, a cultural project headed up by designers Anna Citelli and Raoul Bretzel. If not, in summary:

The thinking behind tree pod burials is that “life never stops”. The environmental significance of these burials is important to consider if you wish for your loved one to have an eco-friendly funeral. Essentially, the deceased becomes part of nature’s cycle once more, preserving a body and allowing new life to grow from it.

“ Capsula Mundi is a cultural and broad-based project, which envisions a different approach to the way we think about death. It’s an egg-shaped pod, an ancient and perfect form, made of biodegradable material, where our departed loved ones are placed for burial... A tree, chosen in life by the deceased, will be planted on top of it and serve as a memorial for the departed and as a legacy for posterity and the future of our planet. ”

(Capsula Mundi).





Burial shrouds

Burial shrouds may be required for religious reasons, but also offer an ideal option for an eco-friendly funeral.

You may wish to choose a specific material for your loved one's burial shroud. Typical materials include:

- Cotton
- Linen
- Muslin
- Hemp
- Silk

The burial shroud can be designed in any way you wish. Some people choose to have large pockets sewn onto the top, so they can bury small trinkets and keepsakes with the departed. Another option is to sew mushroom spores to the material. This is part of a "mushroom shroud burial", which encourages new life to grow from the shroud itself once buried in the earth.

The main benefit of shrouding is that it controls body leakages. When a body is wrapped in a shroud made from biodegradable cloth, the chance of body leakages seeping into the ground decreases, making shrouding a popular eco-friendly burial option.





Transportation

One simple way to be greener with your loved one's funeral is to consider your transportation options.

Instead of travelling in a full procession, you might want to consider car sharing with other funeral attendees. While it's important for the body to be transported carefully, you could discuss the following options with your friends and family:

- Cycling (if the burial site is within a cyclable distance, this could be an option for you)
- Walking with family (this is a nice opportunity to share stories and memories of the deceased)

- Reducing the number of cars used by carpooling
- Horse-drawn carriage (this may be an option for you, especially if the deceased requested it in their wishes)





Other considerations

If you're looking for any further eco-friendly alternatives to include in your loved one's send-off, there are a few little tweaks you could make:

Avoid printing Order of Service sheets or hymns – if you've avoided a traditional coffin, take your tree preservation one step further and avoid using paper if you can. Rather than printing the Order of Service or hymn sheets, you could try emailing them to the attendees and ask them to read from their mobile phones instead. Alternatively, ensure you use recycled or sustainably sourced paper.

Food and drink: Food a more environmentally friendly wake, avoid the use of plastic cutlery, plates and glasses. If using a caterer, try to ensure that you use a local supplier and that food is grown or sourced locally, to reduce the carbon footprint. You could take this one step further by opting for a meat-free wake or looking for a local micro-brewery for the drinks.

Flowers: It is traditional to have flowers a funeral, yet many are realising that donations to charity can have a more lasting effect. If you do opt to have flowers at the funeral, think about sourcing these as sustainably as possible, for example using plants that can live on for a longer period.

House clearances: When someone dies, there is a lot to deal with. While many of their possessions will have sentimental value, there will inevitably be some items that don't have any immediate use. When organising a house clearance, consider looking for projects that will recycle household goods or re-home them with people in need, rather than sending unwanted items to landfill.

Limit the impact of funeral or memorial events: Once very popular at funerals, balloon releases are now known to have an impact on the environment and wildlife. Consider using bubbles, planting trees or even using flying wish paper for a more eco-friendly alternative.





Summary

There are many reasons why a person may choose to have an eco-friendly burial when they pass away. They may have had a passion for the planet and keeping it clean, they may have been a vegan or vegetarian, or they may simply wish to send their body back to nature.

Whatever the reason, there are plenty of options and alternatives available. If you want to hold an eco-friendly funeral for your loved one, you can talk with your Funeral Director about what's best. From the burial site and the transport, coffin or shroud materials and even ideas for the wake, your Funeral Director will be able help you decide what's right for you and your family in this time of need.

Find your local Funeral Director today and discuss your options.

To find out more about
eco-friendly funerals

Please call

0808 271 3541

or visit

dignityfunerals.co.uk

