



The Woodlands at Royal Oak will be ready for use in the late fall (Oct. - Nov.) of 2008. The following are answers to many of the questions the Burial Park receives about our green burial plans.

philosophy

Green burial is a statement of personal values for those who seek to minimize their impact on the local and global environment. For people who are mindful of the cyclical nature of life, green burial is a spiritually fulfilling alternative to conventional burial.

Green burial is an environmentally sensitive practice where the body is returned to the earth to decompose naturally and contribute to new life.

The body is prepared for burial without embalming and is buried in a biodegradable container or shroud made from sustainable, locally harvested wood, wicker, recycled cardboard or natural fibre.

The green burial area is a place where individual graves become part of a natural landscape and the entire area becomes a part of the larger, local ecosystem.

the woodlands at royal oak

Royal Oak Burial Park is located in a Coastal Douglas Fir ecosystem, with the surrounding forest characterized by a mix of Douglas Fir, Grand Fir, Red Alder, Bigleaf Maple, and Western Red Cedar. Arbutus and Garry Oak also grow where conditions permit.

Royal Oak's green burial site, to be called The Woodlands, complements the cemetery's existing forest ecosystem. An informal framework of trees and shrubs will be planted to divide The Woodlands into five sections or "forest rooms."

As burials occur, a selection of native trees, shrubs, perennials and spring bulbs will be planted in clusters on and around grave sites.

Families will be able to choose what will be planted on their gravesites by selecting from a range of native plant palettes offered by the Burial Park.

For some graves, a young tree may be chosen from an adjacent tree nursery. Remaining open space will be restored with native grasses and wildflowers.

Over time, each of the areas will develop into a distinct "forest room," with its own unique character, yet blending with the surrounding natural environment.





graves

Each grave may be used for the interment of one person in a biodegradable casket or other container, plus the scattering of the cremated remains of up to two persons, if the family so wishes.

A comprehensive lot numbering plan will be developed for the Woodlands and graves will be arranged according to the natural character and configuration of the site.

Graves will be assigned by the Burial Park on an at-need basis and according to a sequential plan designed to work with the natural character and configuration of the site.

Over time, a detailed map of the Forest Rooms will be created. Inground lot markers will be installed on a regular basis for reference and operational purposes.

When a burial has taken place, all pertinent details will be recorded in our permanent records and these records will be maintained, as required by law, in perpetuity.

interments

Graves will be dug and filled by the Burial Park. Arrangements can be made if family or friends wish to assist in the filling in of the grave. Some find this helpful in the bereavement process.

Soil excavated from the gravesite will be adjacent to the grave during the burial service - not trucked away and replaced as for conventional burials.

Only human remains that are not embalmed and are in a fully biodegradable casket or other container will be permitted for interment.

Graves will be dug to a depth of approximately 1.2 metres. This depth has been identified as ideal to achieve the optimum natural decomposition rate for the casket and the human remains in the grave. (This depth is more than sufficient to ensure animal intrusion into the grave is not possible.)

Interments made in The Woodlands are irreversible, as disinterments would be extremely damaging to the site's evolving ecosystem.





memorials

The plantings a family chooses for a grave are intended to become living memorials to the person who has died. Conventional, individual memorial markers or monuments will not be used in The Woodlands.

A series of common memorials built from local stone will be placed in The Woodlands. Each community memory stone will have room for a simple inscription to record the names of the persons buried in the area.

On the day of interment and for a week following the burial, memorial flowers will be permitted to remain on the grave. After that, only approved plantings will be permitted. Potted plants, flower vases, adornments, statues or other objects will be prohibited from The Woodlands.

planting & maintenance

The trees, shrubs, wildflowers and groundcover used in the Woodlands will be typical of the native species found on lower Vancouver Island.

In order to create a diverse, balanced mix of plants in The Woodlands, the Burial Park will carry out all planting activity according to an established, natural planting plan for the area.

Families will be offered a choice of plantings depending on the location of the grave used and may be allowed to participate in the planting of their selections. In keeping with best horticultural practices, tree, shrub and wildflower planting will be done seasonally.

Following an interment, there may be a period from a few months up to a full year when the ground is left to settle before any planting can take place. This would mean that a burial that takes place in late winter may not have a tree planted on that grave until the following fall.

Trees will be planted with sufficient room for them to grow and create a canopy for wildlife movement, forage and habitation.

On recently used graves, woodchips may be used as a mulch to suppress grass and weeds. This material will eventually break down and contribute organic material to the soil.

The goal will always be to maintain as natural an area as possible; it is nonetheless necessary for the site to be managed and kept accessible, especially during the operational phase.

Groundcover will be mown from time to time and weed control will be carried out periodically to ensure that trees and plantings can flourish. Ivy, blackberry, broom and other invasive species will be monitored and removed as needed to stop them taking from hold. Herbicides and pesticides will not be used at The Woodlands.





access & visiting

Access to The Woodlands will be on foot. There will be no private vehicle access to the site, and only cemetery and funeral service vehicles will be permitted to drive into the area.

Access for interment services will be made along a gravel roadway. As graves are used, these roadways will gradually be removed and reclaimed for additional grave space.

When fully utilized, access into The Woodlands will be along a narrow footpath. A few small clearings with seating will be maintained for visiting and quiet contemplation in a secluded setting.

Visitors to The Woodlands will be welcome during regular visiting hours of the Burial Park; however, visitors are asked not to seek out individual graves. This limitation is in place because once trees and shrubs are planted, unrestricted access would be detrimental to their survival, as well as to the ecosystem of the area as a whole.

cost

The price for a grave in the Royal Oak Woodlands is projected to be in the range of \$2,500 to \$2,900 per grave. As required by law, 25% of the lot price will be invested into the perpetual care fund of the Burial Park.

Additional costs to be considered will be:

- Interment fee – the cost for the Burial Park to dig the grave, prepare it for the burial service, fill in the grave and perform all related administrative and permanent records tasks (currently \$735);
- Memorial Inscription – the cost for the Burial Park to have a name added to a community memory stone (estimated to be \$335);
- Memorial Plantings – families will select (up to 3) memorial plantings for their grave from established plant list (estimated to be \$125 per planting).





Professional Services (additional to cemetery fees) – local funeral homes will arrange for the transfer, sanitary care and refrigerated shelter of the deceased, prepare legal documentation and acquire the burial permit, provide a selection of biodegradable caskets and containers, coordinate memorial services as directed by the family and transfer the remains to the gravesite for the committal service and burial.

Some cost savings may be realized with the selection of a natural burial in The Woodlands – e.g., fees eliminated for embalming, a grave liner, and individual memorials.

However, families must also recognize they will be giving up some commonly held expectations relating to traditional burial and remembrance practices – for example, the ability to select the exact location of their grave, the placement of a permanent memorial or other adornments, flowers after one week and, as the site matures, unlimited access to individual graves.

ecological benefits

Some of the key benefits of a green burial in The Woodlands:

- Efficient land use based on more burial sites being provided through the elimination of easements required for memorials and infrastructure; reclamation of roadways.
- Utilization of only on-site or local materials to develop the site.
- Biodiversity and habitat enhancement through the planting of indigenous plant species, creating nesting sites and food sources for birds and other animals.
- Natural storm-water permeability and retention through the reduction of hard materials associated with conventional burial sites (asphalt roads, concrete liners, steel caskets, granite or bronze markers, etc).
- Restoration of the area over time to return it visually and functionally to the surrounding landscape.
- Minimized fossil fuel consumption through reduced excavation needs, limited use of mechanical equipment for maintenance and the prohibition of private vehicle access.
- Elimination of pesticides and herbicides used in conventional landscape settings.
- Reduction or elimination of toxins and contaminants released into the soil, air and water during the manufacture and transportation of goods associated with conventional burial and cremation practices.

