

Waitsfield Cemeteries Natural Burial Guidelines

Adopted August 25, 2026

A *natural burial* is a simple and traditional way of laying a loved one to rest without embalming, metal caskets, or concrete vaults. It emphasizes simplicity and care for the earth, allowing the body to return naturally to the soil.

Natural burials are available in all four Waitsfield cemeteries.

Guidelines

1. Body Care

- The body may be kept at home or may be transported to a funeral home. The body should not be embalmed. It may be bathed and kept cool, as close to 45 degrees as is practical. If refrigeration is necessary, families may contact a local funeral home for assistance.
- Vermont requires a permit from the town clerk to transport a body. The family, or the funeral home acting on the family's behalf, is responsible for obtaining the permit.

2. Container

- If a container is used, it must be biodegradable, such as a wooden box or a wicker basket.
- A shroud is another option, but the body must be supported on a biodegradable board.
- Metal, plastic, or other non-biodegradable materials may not be used.

3. Grave Depth

- A burial must have at least 3.5 feet of earth covering the top of the container or shrouded body, consistent with Vermont requirements.

4. Grave Marking

- Every lot must have a permanent marker and cornerstones.
- Marker style, size, and material must comply with Cemetery Commission requirements.

5. Lot Maintenance

- Natural burial lots are maintained like all others in the cemetery: grass-covered and mown regularly.
- Trees, shrubs, or other plantings require advance approval by the Cemetery Commission.

6. Burial Process

- The family or its designee is responsible for arranging the lowering of the container or shrouded body into the grave. The Cemetery Commission and the cemetery personnel do not provide this service.
- Use sturdy biodegradable straps and a board. Biodegradable straps and a support board may be purchased through a Funeral home or the Waitsfield Cemetery Commission.
- Families are encouraged to participate in backfilling the grave if they wish. Enshrouded burials must be covered with soil before cemetery personnel can fill the grave.

7. Seasonal Burials

- Cemeteries are open for burials May 1 through November 1, weather and ground conditions permitting.

8. Compliance with Law

- All burials must comply with Vermont law and Department of Health requirements.

Important Notes

- Natural burial is intended to be simple and environmentally friendly.
- Families and participants assume responsibility for their participation in burial activities. The Waitsfield Cemetery Commission and Town are not responsible for accidents or injuries that may occur during family participation in the lowering or covering of a grave.
- Before making arrangements, the family or designee must contact the Cemetery Sexton or the Cemetery Commission to discuss burial plans and cemetery requirements.
- Visit <https://www.waitsfieldvt.gov/boards-meetings/cemeteries> to review the current guidelines, policies, and pricing.