SMITH FUNERAL CHAPEL · EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN

# Green Burial

**The oldest way there is, done gently: no embalming chemicals, nothing that won't break down, and a body returned to the earth it came from.**

## What green burial is

In the plainest definition, a green burial means a person is buried in **a container that can decompose, along with their remains, and return to the soil**. Every part of it is as organic as possible. The body is not filled with embalming chemicals, and nothing is put in the ground that the earth can't take back. Four choices make it green:

1. ### A biodegradable casket, or a shroud

   Earth-friendly caskets are made from natural materials — **bamboo, sea grass, banana leaves, even woven willow branches** — and are fully biodegradable, with no traces of **metal, toxic glue, plastic, or varnish**. A casket isn't required at all: a person can be wrapped in a favorite **unbleached, undyed cloth, a blanket, or a tapestry**, and burial shrouds made for the purpose are sold as well.

2. ### No burial vault or grave liner

   A vault is the concrete or plastic box that surrounds a casket in the ground. Green cemeteries **prohibit them entirely**, and traditional cemeteries are beginning to drop the requirement. Without one, the body **returns to the earth at the fastest rate possible**.

3. ### No embalming

   Standard embalming fluid contains formaldehyde, a likely carcinogen hazardous to the environment and the embalmer. Skipping it can mean a funeral happens a little more quickly — and **refrigeration and dry ice** preserve a body perfectly well in between; we handle that at the funeral home. The CDC is clear that **an average dead body is neither dangerous nor contagious**.

4. ### A green burial place

   Ideally a **fully green burial ground**, or the **green section of a traditional cemetery** — a hybrid arrangement many now offer. Wisconsin has both kinds. Which places allow what changes, so **call us for the current picture**: (715) 832-1141.

# Questions Families Ask

## Is this legal in Wisconsin?

Yes. No Wisconsin law requires embalming, and no law requires a burial vault — vaults are a cemetery's own rule, which is why the choice of cemetery matters. We handle the permits and paperwork either way.

## Can we still have a funeral?

Yes — a visitation, a service at our chapel or your church, music, readings, all of it. Green describes how the burial is done, not whether people gather. The timing is a little quicker, and we plan around that with you.

## Can family take part?

Often, yes — carrying the casket or shroud, lowering it, even helping to fill the grave. Many families tell us those are the moments they remember most. It depends on the cemetery's rules, and we sort out what is possible before the day.

## What does it cost?

Usually less than a conventional burial: no vault to buy, a simpler casket, no embalming. The cemetery's charges are its own. Call us and we will lay the whole figure out plainly.

## Can this be planned ahead?

Yes, like any other plan — your wishes recorded with us, free, and funded ahead only if you want. Green burial wishes are exactly the kind a family is relieved to find written down.

### Call for more information

Which cemeteries, what it costs, how the timing works — call **(715) 832-1141** any time. No pressure and no obligation. Smith Funeral Chapel · 2222 London Road, Eau Claire, WI 54701 · www.smithfuneralec.com