

## Natural Burial in the Peacham Cemetery

The Cemetery committee recommends that the Town of Peacham designate a site for natural burial in the Peacham Cemetery.

This site would be located on the open hillside below the line of trees on the southeastern side of the cemetery, the meadow that the traditional cemetery looks out on. The site would be maintained as an open field, as it is currently, to be mowed once a year to maintain the current nature of the hillside, free of brush or saplings.

Burial practices would follow those outlined in “General Information about Natural Burial.”

Graves in this burial area would remain unmarked. Gravestones and plantings would be prohibited. This provision aims to protect the “natural” aspects of the graveyard from becoming a jumble of individual markers that would mar the current natural beauty of the meadow and prohibit its maintenance as such. The idea supporting this practice is that the meadow itself be perceived as the burial site rather than a specific grave.

However, individual graves--unmarked on the surface of the meadow--would be identifiable to the Sexton by iron markers placed below the soil level at the corners of the grave. These would be recognizable with a metal detector, thereby providing the Sexton with an accurate map and accounting of grave site locations.

- Families could appeal to the Sexton through the town offices if they wish to locate the specific grave site of a relative who has been buried in the meadow.
- Purchasers of “natural” burial plots would be permitted to purchase multiple plots, as in traditional cemetery practice, to ensure that family members can be buried close to each other.
- Families would be allowed to dig graves by hand and then fill them in under the supervision of the Sexton.
- Families who currently own unoccupied burial sites in the traditional area of the cemetery would be allowed to utilize those sites for “natural” burials. This option would best suit families who wish to purchase a “natural” burial site but also feel the need to have the site marked by a gravestone.

A large stone marker or stele would be placed near the area’s parking and would post the names, birth dates, and death dates of those buried at the site.

In pursuing the possibility of the Peacham cemetery offering a site for “natural” burials, the Town would hold public meetings to discuss the proposal. These meetings might offer the Select Board a window onto how many Peacham residents—and perhaps those of neighboring towns—are interested in choosing to have a natural burial option available. Additionally, the meetings would provide an explanation of natural burial procedures to those who may be unfamiliar with this alternative form of burial.