



End-of-Life Care That's Good For the Planet

Reclaiming death care practices that are community focused and environmentally-friendly.



THE DEATH CARE REVOLUTION IS UPON US

The funeral industry is undergoing a significant transformation, marked by a shift towards transparency in pricing and a growing emphasis on eco-friendly death care practices. This revolution in death care not only addresses the environmental impact of traditional burial and cremation methods but also caters to the evolving preferences of consumers seeking more sustainable and cost-effective options. Two standout practices, green burial and aquamation, exemplify this shift, offering alternatives that are both gentle on the planet and reflective of a modern approach to saying goodbye.

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FAREWELL EARTH IS A NONPROFIT WITH A MISSION TO FOSTER HONEST CONVERSATIONS ABOUT DEATH AND DYING, PROMOTE ECO-FRIENDLY DEATH CARE PRACTICES, AND RECLAIM THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RITUAL AND REMEMBRANCE. WE BELIEVE IN A WORLD WHERE THE END-OF-LIFE PROCESS IS NOT SHROUDED IN FEAR BUT EMBRACED AS A NATURAL, MEANINGFUL CHAPTER OF OUR JOURNEY.



DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS,

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the Farewell Earth Newsletter. On this Earth Day 2024, we are excited to announce the launch of our website, [FarewellEarth.org](https://farewellearth.org). Our mission is centered around the importance of integrating environmental stewardship with the practices surrounding death and remembrance.

OUR MISSION

At Farewell Earth, we are dedicated to raising awareness about eco-friendly death care, a critical yet often overlooked aspect of our environmental footprint. Traditional burial and cremation methods pose significant ecological concerns—from carbon emissions to chemical usage. Our aim is to offer sustainable alternatives that are both dignified and in harmony with our environmental values.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ECO-FRIENDLY DEATH CARE

Eco-friendly death care practices, such as green burial and aquamation, minimize environmental impact, reduce carbon footprints, and allow natural processes to reclaim what we leave behind. By choosing these methods, we honor our loved ones and our planet in equal measure.

EXPLORE AND ENGAGE

We encourage you to visit [FarewellEarth.org](https://farewellearth.org) to learn about sustainable death care options and how you can participate in promoting these practices. Our site is a comprehensive resource for those looking to make informed decisions about end-of-life care that respects our ecological commitments.

STAY CONNECTED

Keep an eye on our newsletter for updates on the latest in sustainable death care, upcoming events, and community stories. We are excited to bring you expert insights, personal stories, and practical advice on embracing eco-conscious end-of-life practices.

Joining Farewell Earth means being part of a movement dedicated to transforming our final acts into a testament to our care for the environment. Your involvement is crucial as we strive to create a legacy that respects and preserves our planet for future generations.

Thank you for your support and for taking this important journey with us. Together, we can make a difference.

- FAREWELL EARTH TEAM



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: SHENAE MCPHERSON



Shenae McPherson is at the forefront of promoting healthy aging and sustainable living in Orange County. As the administrator of the Volunteer Connect 55+ division for the Orange County Department on Aging, she develops enriching programming that educates older adults on available resources to support their aging journey and connects them with nature, enhancing their quality of life.

Passionate about environmental sustainability, Shenae is a proud member and supporter of the Bluestem Conservation Cemetery Council of Stewards. She also advocates for the eco-friendly death care movement, and supports end-of-life care options that align with the community's ecological values.

Farewell Earth Magazine celebrates Shenae as a key community asset, driving forward initiatives that support both a vibrant aging population and a healthier planet.



COMMUNITY EVENTS

DURHAM COUNTY EARTH DAY: FREE

APRIL 21
12PM - 5PM
DURHAM CENTRAL PARK

DAYLIGHT DEATH CAFE: FREE

MAY 15
10AM - 12PM
ROBERT AND PEARL SEYMOUR CENTER

ORANGE COUNTY DEATH CAFE: FREE

MAY 17
6PM - 8PM
ENDSWELL FUNERAL HOME

END OF LIFE EXPO: FREE

MAY 18
12PM - 3PM
ROBERT AND PEARL SEYMOUR CENTER



COMPARING END-OF-LIFE OPTIONS: THE COSTS AND THE CARBON FOOTPRINT

Choosing an end-of-life option is a deeply personal decision that increasingly includes considerations of environmental impact and cost. While traditional burials and cremation remain common, green burial and aquamation offer more sustainable and often less expensive alternatives. As awareness grows, these eco-friendly options are becoming more accessible, allowing individuals to align their final farewell with their environmental values and financial circumstances.

TRADITIONAL BURIAL

Traditional burials are often the most expensive option, with costs including a casket, embalming, the burial plot, headstone, and funeral service fees. Prices can vary widely but often exceed \$8,000, reaching upwards of \$15,000 or more.

The environmental impact is significant. Traditional burials use embalming fluids, such as formaldehyde, which can leach into the earth. Moreover, the production of metal or hardwood caskets and the maintenance of graveyards (especially lawn care) contribute substantially to carbon emissions.

CREMATION

Cremation is generally less expensive than traditional burial, with costs ranging from \$1,200 to \$6000, including the urn and service fees. Prices can increase with additional memorial services or premium urns.

Cremation reduces the use of land and eliminates the need for embalming chemicals. However, it requires significant energy, mainly from fossil fuels, and releases carbon dioxide and other pollutants into the atmosphere.

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GREEN BURIAL

The costs for green burials can be similar to or slightly less than traditional burials, primarily because they do not involve embalming, elaborate caskets, or vaults. Expenses typically range from \$5,000 to \$10,000 for the plot and necessary services.

Green burials have a minimal environmental impact. They forego embalming chemicals and use biodegradable caskets or shrouds, promoting natural decomposition and allowing the body to return nutrients to the earth. This option conserves natural habitats and requires less land management.

AQUAMATION (ALKALINE HYDROLYSIS)

Aquamation costs are comparable to cremation, generally between \$2,500 and \$4,500.

Aquamation has a significantly lower carbon footprint than cremation. It uses water and an alkaline solution to accelerate natural decomposition, using 90% less energy than cremation and producing no direct emissions. The process results in a sterile liquid that can safely be returned to the ecosystem and bone ash similar to cremation remains.





BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO ADVANCED PLANNING: END-OF-LIFE CHECKLIST

Creating a detailed checklist for end-of-life planning, especially for disposition, is a crucial step in ensuring that your wishes are respected and your loved ones are relieved of unnecessary stress. Here's a comprehensive checklist to guide you through the process.

■ DOCUMENT YOUR WISHES

1. Write a living will to outline your wishes regarding medical treatment and end-of-life care.
2. Prepare an advance directive to specify your health care preferences in scenarios where you are unable to communicate.
3. Consider a DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) order if applicable.

■ CHOOSE A METHOD OF DISPOSITION

1. Research and decide between traditional burial, cremation, green burial, aquamation, or other disposition methods.
2. If opting for burial, choose a cemetery and purchase a plot.
3. If choosing Aquamation or cremation, decide on what will be done with your ashes.

■ PLAN YOUR FUNERAL OR MEMORIAL SERVICE

1. Specify the type of service you want (funeral, memorial service, celebration of life).
2. Choose a location for your service.
3. Choose a Funeral Home or other provider of burial, cremation, or Aquamation.
4. Compare different packages and ensure they align with your wishes.
5. Make Arrangements in advance. While you don't need to prepay, you should always preplan with a Funeral Home, cemetery, or other provider.

■ FINANCIAL PLANNING

1. Review your insurance policies (life, funeral, burial) to ensure they cover your end-of-life needs.
2. Explore setting up a payable-on-death account to handle any immediate post-death expenses.
3. Ensure your executor has access to funds to cover immediate post-mortem expenses.

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■ LEGAL DOCUMENTATION

1. Ensure your will is up to date and reflects your current wishes for your estate and the disposition of your remains.
2. Appoint an executor who will oversee the carrying out of your wishes and the distribution of your estate.
3. Secure a power of attorney who can make decisions on your behalf if you become incapacitated.

■ COMMUNICATE WITH FAMILY AND LOVED ONES

1. Discuss your plans and any responsibilities they may have.
2. Provide copies of relevant documents, or inform them where these documents are stored.
3. Ensure that key people know who your attorney, executor, and any other important contacts are.

■ RECORD KEEPING

1. Keep a secure, accessible file of all your end-of-life documents, including your will, insurance policies, real estate deeds, and advance directives.
2. List out all personal accounts and passwords, along with instructions on how they should be handled.

■ REVIEW REGULARLY

1. Revisit and update your plans and documents every few years or after major life changes such as marriage, divorce, the birth of a child, or the death of a designated executor or beneficiary.

By following this checklist, you can ensure that all aspects of your end-of-life and disposition plans are considered and organized, providing peace of mind for both you and your loved ones.

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Every time we talk about the environment, let's remember it's our environment, providing the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the soil we use for food.

Sustainable living and dying are about respecting and caring for this interconnected web.

JONATHON PORRITT

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THE DEATH CARE REVOLUTION IS UPON US: EVOLVING DEATH CARE PRACTICES

EMBRACING TRANSPARENCY IN PRICING

For decades, the funeral industry has been criticized for its opaque pricing structures, leaving grieving families confused and often overwhelmed by unexpected costs. The modern death care revolution seeks to change this by advocating for clear, upfront pricing. Many funeral service providers are now offering itemized price lists for all their services, including green burial and aquamation options. This move towards transparency empowers families to make informed decisions that align with their financial constraints and personal values, reducing the stress of planning a funeral during an already difficult time.

GREEN BURIAL: RETURNING TO THE EARTH

Green burial stands out as a key component of the eco-friendly death care movement. This method eschews the use of chemical embalming fluids, metal caskets, and concrete burial vaults, opting instead for biodegradable materials that allow the body to decompose naturally and contribute to the ecosystem. Green burial sites often double as conservation projects, preserving natural landscapes and supporting biodiversity. By choosing green burial, individuals not only minimize their environmental footprint but also embrace a process that celebrates the cycle of life in its most natural form.

AQUAMATION:

A GENTLE ALTERNATIVE TO CREMATION

Aquamation, or alkaline hydrolysis, offers an eco-friendly alternative to traditional cremation, using water and an alkaline solution to break down the body into its natural components. This process emits no greenhouse gases and uses significantly less energy than cremation. The family receives ashes, just as they do with cremation. By not burning the body, no toxic gases are released into the atmosphere. Aquamation presents a dignified method of disposition that aligns with the values of those seeking a more sustainable choice.

EMBRACING CHANGING NORMS

The death care revolution is a reflection of changing societal norms and an increasing awareness of environmental sustainability. As more people look for ways to reduce their ecological footprint, even in death, the funeral industry is adapting to meet these demands with innovative and transparent services. Green burial and aquamation represent the forefront of this shift, offering meaningful, respectful, and eco-friendly alternatives to traditional practices. This revolution in death care not only provides more options for families but also marks a significant step forward in our collective journey towards a more sustainable future.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE OR CONTACT US TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE
PUBLICATION OF THIS NEWSLETTER.