



Guide to a Green Burial at Blazing Star Sanctuary

Purchasing burial plots and planning a funeral are significant events. We appreciate your interest in green burial and Blazing Star Sanctuary. Nature's Burial is dedicated to preserving and restoring natural spaces while also celebrating life in a meaningful and lasting way, and the Blazing Star Sanctuary is the first certified conservation cemetery in Texas and is nestled within the Katy Prairie Preserve at a new publicly accessible location known as the Blazing Star Prairie. The Blazing Star Prairie is being restored to a natural tall-grass prairie and will be protected forever as a nature sanctuary for the grassland and wetland birds and other wildlife that rely on a healthy coastal prairie ecosystem.

Nature's Burial is wholly owned by the Coastal Prairie Conservancy, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and all proceeds from plot sales are used to restore and manage the Blazing Star Prairie and support the mission of the Coastal Prairie Conservancy.

What is green burial?

- Refrigeration is used for preservation. Chemical embalming is not used.
- The body is interred in a biodegradable container.
- Concrete vaults are not used in the grave.
- Family and friend involvement in the burial process is encouraged.

Is conservation burial different from green burial?

- The burial grounds are protected forever by a conservation nonprofit land trust or government agency.
 - *For Blazing Star Sanctuary, the Coastal Prairie Conservancy will ensure land is protected and managed as a natural area to provide critical wildlife habitat.*
- The natural burial grounds must be at least 20 acres, or 5 acres if contiguous to other protected lands.
 - *The 7.7 acres of Blazing Star Sanctuary are contiguous to and part of the protected Katy Prairie Preserve, which encompasses over 19,000 acres.*
- The density may not exceed an average of 300 plots per acre, compared to 1000+/acre in a conventional cemetery.
 - *At Blazing Star Sanctuary, the 1754 natural burial plots result in an average of 228 plots per acre.*
- Protocols must be in place to ensure ecological restoration and ecosystem health.
 - *At Blazing Star Sanctuary, the land will be managed to restore tall grass prairie, including plantings of native wildflowers and grasses, prescribed fire, and other activities to support grassland health and biodiversity.*

What are the sizes of burial plots at Blazing Star Sanctuary?

Our plots are larger than traditional cemetery plots and this lower burial density allows us to protect more habitat and avoid undue disturbance to the native flora and fauna living on the preserve.

- Natural burial plots are 13.5 feet x 8 feet.
- Cremains and infant plots are 5 feet x 5 feet.

What are the primary components of funeral planning?

- Selection of a **plot at the cemetery** to be buried in. You would enter an agreement with Nature's Burial for the selected plot.
- Engage a **funeral home** to manage details such as transportation of the body, death certificates, and preservation of the body until the time of burial. You will pay the funeral home for these services directly.
- You may wish to arrange a **funeral or memorial service** at a funeral home, place of worship or other location. You may visit with Nature's Burial about the possibility of hosting a service at the Coastal Prairie Conservancy's Welcome Center.
- Nature's Burial will engage **burial service** contractors to open and close the grave. If you have chosen to have a graveside service, the contractor will also set up the tent and chairs for the burial service. You will pay Nature's Burial for this cost, unless your funeral home has included these services in your package. See current price list for the cost of these services, which are in addition to the purchase of the plot.

What is at-need vs. pre-need?

Plots can be purchased with us at the time of need (often called **at-need**) or they can be purchased in advance of any need (called **pre-need**). The purchase processes are similar, but purchasing at-need may be more involved due to coping with a recent loss and a burial service being planned at the same time as the purchase. We are available to support you in either circumstance.

Pre-need clients who are purchasing a plot for future use are eligible for a 10 month, no interest, payment plan. All at-need clients are expected to pay the full amount for the burial plot, as well as any fees associated with burial services, by the time of the service.

What are burial services (or opening and closing services)?

Burial services include opening the grave, closing the grave, and may also include setting up chairs and a tent for the graveside service. The price varies depending on the plot type, day of the week, and the services you are requesting. Please see the current opening and closing services price list for current costs, which are subject to change. This service is handled by an outside contractor or by Nature's Burial staff and/or volunteers. The plot owner is responsible for paying these costs prior to the burial. The burial services fee cannot be pre-paid; it can only be paid at the time of need (unless this is included as part of a pre-need package with a funeral home).

What are the roles of the cemetery and the funeral director in funeral planning?

- Cemetery – The cemetery will provide a plot to be used for burial.
- Funeral home - The funeral home will care for and preserve the body until the time of burial, coordinate the transfer of the body to the burial container, manage the transportation to the cemetery, and issue death certificate(s).
- The cemetery or the funeral home may arrange for burial service contractors to open and close the grave, which may also include a tent and chairs for a graveside burial service. See current price list for the cost of these services, which are in addition to the purchase of the plot.

We will work closely with the funeral home to coordinate the burial of your loved one at Blazing Star Cemetery.

Any funeral home can provide the services necessary for a green burial, and some even offer green burial packages. Most funeral homes have a territory they service but are willing to travel outside of that area for an additional fee. Many offer pre-need funeral packages that you can even set up and pay in advance.

An important piece of planning a funeral or burial is locating and choosing a funeral home. The fees funeral homes charge can vary significantly, so it is important to compare prices. Nature's Burial does not endorse any particular funeral home; however, below is a list of funeral homes who have organized funerals with us in the past and are familiar with green burial.

- Chip Beresford - [Beresford Funeral Home](https://beresfordfunerals.com/)
 - <https://beresfordfunerals.com/>
 - (281)-933-9090
- Joseph Earthman - [Earthman Generations Funeral Home](https://www.josephearthman.com/)
 - <https://www.josephearthman.com/>
 - (713)-802-0000
- Syd Waldman - [Waldman Funeral Care](https://www.waldmanfuneralcare.com/)
 - <https://www.waldmanfuneralcare.com/>
 - (713)-875-4811
- Catherine Blair - [Beyond Legacy \(home funerals\)](https://www.beyondlegacy.org/)
 - <https://www.beyondlegacy.org/>
 - (713)-979-8303
- Alma Ochoa - [Grace Funeral Home](https://www.gracefuneralhome.org/)
 - <https://www.gracefuneralhome.org/>
 - (832)-328-4987

- *Schmidt Funeral Home - Katy* - [Schmidt Funeral Home](https://www.schmidtfuneralhome.net/)
 - <https://www.schmidtfuneralhome.net/>
 - (281)-391-2424
- *Cypress-Fairbanks Funeral Home* - [Cypress-Fairbanks Funeral Home](https://www.cyfairfunerals.com/)
 - <https://www.cyfairfunerals.com/>
 - (281)-897-9823
- *Bradshaw-Carter Funeral Home* - [Bradshaw-Carter Memorial & Funeral Services](https://www.bradshawcarter.com/)
 - <https://www.bradshawcarter.com/>
 - (713)-521-0066

If you are interested in working with a funeral home that is unfamiliar with green burial, we are happy to provide education to support your wishes.

Funeral homes are generally responsible for:

- Picking up the deceased and transporting the body to the funeral home (anytime day or night)
- Cleaning and caring for the body
- Refrigerating the body until burial
- Notifying the proper authorities or relatives
- Preparing death certificates, providing copies for the family, and communicating with insurance companies, the Veterans Administration, or Social Security
- Assisting with the obituary
- Helping the family choose a burial container (more on this in the section below)
- Coordinating the funeral, burial service, or memorial service
- Transporting the body to the burial site

What does a funeral home need to know about green burial?

- No embalming - refrigeration only
- Use a biodegradable container for burial or cremains
- Only use cut flowers and greenery at the grave
- If the decedent has a pacemaker, it must be removed (all other artificial joints/devices may remain)
- Dress the decedent in natural fibers as much as possible - cotton, linen, etc.
- Remove all plastic wrappings from the decedent and use a cotton sheet instead.

What kind of burial container can be used?

Green Burial allows the body to return to the earth in a natural and dignified way. Some examples of containers appropriate for burial at Blazing Star Sanctuary are:

- Shrouds made of cotton, linen, wool, or another natural fiber (i.e. bed sheets, blankets, quilts, etc.)
- Wicker or woven caskets
- Natural wood caskets (a few nails or hinges is acceptable)
- Cardboard caskets
- Bamboo caskets

Items made with natural materials may be buried with the deceased. Examples may include a letter, a leather journal, or a stuffed animal.

Any funeral home that provides green funeral services can assist you with a green burial container, however in the state of Texas you can purchase them directly.

Here are a few respected fabricators and retailers for green burial containers.

On-Line Retailers

<u>Passages International</u>	http://www.passagesinternational.com/ (505)-830-2500
<u>The Old Pine Box</u>	https://www.theoldpinebox.com/ (765)-205-1820
<u>Nature's Casket</u>	https://naturescasket.com/ (720)-343-0912
<u>Urns Northwest</u>	https://urnsnw.com/collections/caskets-burial-shrouds (877)-900-5309
<u>The Green Man Casket Co</u>	@thegreenmancasketco on Instagram
<u>Natural Burial Company</u>	https://funerals.naturalburialcompany.com/ (503)-493-9258
<u>Cardboard Coffin Company</u>	https://cardboardcoffincompany.com/shop/ (758) – 406 - 3849

Carolina Memorial Sanctuary has also compiled a **[very helpful page on green burial containers](#)** and retailers.

- <https://carolinamemorialsanctuary.org/biodegradable-burial-containers-for-green-burial-offins-casket>

Local Retailers

<u>Beresford Funeral Home</u>	https://beresfordfunerals.com/ (281)-933-9090
<u>Budget Casket</u>	https://budgetcaskethouston.com/collections/shop-all-caskets (713)-465-1883
<u>Miller Funeral Home</u>	https://www.millerfuneral.com/ (713)-981-1184
<u>Earthman Generations Funeral Home</u>	https://www.josephearthman.com/ (713)-802-0000

What kind of grave markers are used?

Traditional headstones are not used at Blazing Star Sanctuary. For each burial we provide an engraved metal disk to mark and memorialize the gravesite. The marker includes the decedent's name, date of birth, date of passing, and can include a small religious or military insignia. The markers are pressed into the top of the grave to close the service. We also provide precise GPS coordinates for each plot and record each interment in the Waller County property records.

How involved can the family be in a natural burial?

Green burial allows family and friends to play an active role in the burial process. Families can assist with bringing the body to the gravesite using a hand-drawn wheeled cart, lowering the body, and covering the grave with topsoil and native seeds and plantings. Families can also design a graveside service that honors their loved one's values and wishes. For instance, they may tell stories, read poetry, or play music. Nature's Burial representatives will be present to provide support and guidance throughout the process.

What should I expect at a burial?

Gathering

Burial attendees may gather directly at the Blazing Star Sanctuary for graveside ceremonies. A service road allows family and friends close access to the cemetery. A path is mowed to the graveside, but the ground is uneven and may be difficult to navigate for individuals with mobility issues. As the Blazing Star Sanctuary does not currently have shade, water or restrooms, guests may

gather at the Coastal Prairie Conservancy Welcome Center at Indiangrass Preserve, about 10 minutes from the cemetery. It is home to a fully restored prairie and has a meeting area, shade, water, and restrooms.

Attire

Attendees should wear closed toed shoes that are appropriate for outdoor activity, long pants, and a hat if it's sunny. We will provide water, sunscreen, umbrellas, bug spray, and tissues.

Timing

- The grave will be opened prior to the arrival of family and attendees.
- The funeral home will usually arrive with the body about 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start of the service.
- The body is placed on our Amish burial cart for a procession from the hearse to the burial site.
- Family and friends can assist in the procession or walk with the body to the gravesite.
- At the burial site the decedent is placed on boards above the grave for the duration of the service.
- The graveside service is organized by family and friends, and Nature's Burial staff are available to assist with planning. Our staff are also available to provide a short welcome presentation. We can explain the green burial process and the conservation efforts of Nature's Burial and the Coastal Prairie Conservancy.
- When the ceremony has concluded, Nature's Burial staff and volunteers will guide attendees through the lowering process if they have elected to participate in the lowering.
- The closing of the grave involves returning the soil to the grave. The family can opt to close the grave on their own or they can allow the cemetery services staff to close after the service has ended.
Guests will have the opportunity to ceremoniously place a handful or shovelful of earth into the grave. Family and friends are welcome to place cut flowers in and around the grave.
- After closing, the grave will be covered with native prairie hay and native wildflower seeds and the grave marker will be placed on the center of the grave.

Nature's Burial's mission is to ensure that those who choose to be buried here have the ceremony of their choice in a place that preserves the prairie and supports local wildlife.

How do I start the 'pre-need' purchase process?

The process starts by reaching out to us by email at info@naturesburial.org or calling us at 713-860-7410. At that time, you can let us know your specific questions or needs and we can navigate the next steps together. We will send you a map of Blazing Star Sanctuary so that you can choose the plot that you would like to purchase. *

After the plot is chosen, a purchase agreement will be drafted and emailed to you for your signature. A payment link will be sent to your email and phone if you choose to pay via credit card. If you want to pay in person, we do accept checks or we can take your credit card payment over the phone.

After the payment is made, the signed purchase agreement and Certificate of Burial Rights will be emailed to you for your records.

*Only rows A, B, & C are fully marked at this time. The remaining rows will be marked at the end of 2025 or early 2026. If you need to inter a loved one right away you will be asked to select one of the marked plots.

What if I have questions, but I am not ready to purchase?

We understand this can be new to many people and there are many unknowns. We are happy to visit and answer your questions. You can reach out to us by email at info@naturesburial.org or by calling us at 713-860-7410.

A wonderful way to learn about Blazing Star Sanctuary and natural burial is to join us for one of our informational tours. They occur on the second Saturday and third Friday of every month from 10:00 am - 12:00 pm. You can register for the tours on our website.

What documents should I consider having in place in preparation for a good death?

There are many documents to consider when planning for the future, such as a will, a power of attorney, and advanced directives. You can also pre-plan and pre-purchase many important aspects related to your passing such as where you will be buried or cremated, what you will be buried in, and what funeral home you would like to use. It's also important to consider who you want to be responsible for coordinating your services and arranging last-minute details. Generally, this falls to your next of kin so it's important to document the person you wish to make your final decisions, especially if it is different from your legal next of kin. The Appointment of Agent for Disposition of Remains can be another useful document to consider.

What if I need to arrange a green burial now?

Please contact us at 713-860-7410, and we will assist you. If you leave a message, we should be able to get back to you within 24 hours. We can answer your questions, and we will help support you through the process of a natural burial.

The funeral home you choose should be available anytime and can begin the process of transporting and caring for your loved one. Let them know right away that you have chosen a natural burial for your loved one and that you do not desire chemical embalming. Nature's Burial staff is available to visit with the funeral director to coordinate other logistics.