

BEECHWORTH CEMETERY TRUST POLICY

FLOWERS, VASES, ORNAMENTS & BREAKABLE ITEMS

INTRODUCTION

1. The principal function of the Beechworth Cemetery is to provide a public facility for the interment of the bodily and cremated remains of the deceased. The Cemetery is also a place for the community to visit, grieve and pay respect to deceased family members, friends and loved-ones. Flowers and other tributes traditionally form a central role in the funeral, bereavement and grieving process and all who visit are encouraged and welcomed to do so. Conversely, the Cemetery Trust has a responsibility to maintain a safe environment and to minimise risks for all users of the facility. This responsibility extends to items that are brought into the Cemetery and placed on or around graves, as these items may create safety and risk issues due to the potential of damage and breakage. In this regard, the management of the Cemetery is therefore bound by the relevant Occupational Health & Safety Act, Risk Management Principles and the Cemeteries and Crematoria Regulations – 2005. This Policy has been developed to provide clarity to Cemetery users for the following purposes:
 - A. Cemetery users are able to understand the guidelines concerning the placement of floral tributes, ornaments and all such items on the graves of relatives, friends and loved-ones and also within the Cemetery.
 - B. Cemetery staff and Trust members are able to maintain the Cemetery grounds to an aesthetically high standard that can be enjoyed by all users.
 - C. All who enter the Cemetery are able to understand that they have a responsibility in keeping the Cemetery tidy and safe by abiding by this policy.

GUIDELINES

2. The Cemetery Trust respects and understands the sensitivity that surrounds the centuries old tradition of floral and other tributes at funerals and beyond and the placement of these on graves by family and friends of the deceased. Therefore, the following guidelines in regard to the placement of flowers, vases, ornaments and all items by Cemetery users has been adopted by the Cemetery Trust:

3. GENERAL CONDITIONS

A. Flowers

- (i) Fresh, silk, dried and plastic flowers may be placed on graves.
- (ii) Wrappings, string, twine, tape, ribbons and rubber bands are to be removed from fresh flowers prior to placing these into the vases.
- (iii) Fresh flowers that have withered are to be removed by the relatives and friends of the deceased or these will be removed by Cemetery staff.

B. New Burials

With new and re-opened graves, the flowers used in the funeral service are usually placed on the fresh earth that has covered the coffin. It is the responsibility of relatives/friends of the deceased to remove the flowers once these have withered/deteriorated. As a guide, these should be removed about a month after the funeral.

C. Vases, Urns, Ornaments

- (i) The *Cemeteries and Crematoria Regulations – 2005* stipulates that approval for the following items must be sought from the Cemetery Trust prior to these being placed on a memorial or place of interment:
 - . Ceramic or glass items that are fragile or breakable; or
 - . Metal items that are likely to rust or deteriorate; or
 - . Items likely to cause harm or a risk to health or safety.
- (ii) Therefore, unsecured and/or non-approved vases, ornaments, urns, figurines, statuettes, terracotta, ceramics, pottery, terrariums, photo frames, toys, flags, solar items and wind chime/devices are not permitted on graves. (These may pose a safety hazard for Cemetery staff and visitors).
- (iii) Alternatively, approved vases, urns, ornaments etc. as listed above must be secured to the grave by a commercial adhesive that holds the item in place securely. This is especially important for children's graves. The adhesive must also have the capability to withstand Beechworth's climatic extremes. Ribbons, blu-tac, tape, wire etc. are considered to be inappropriate for safety reasons.
- (iv) Household items i.e. glass jars, bottles, dishes/bowls, tins, jugs, decanters, drinking glasses, carafes, receptacles and containers are also prohibited as these items are not designed to hold flowers and are liable to topple, break and again create safety issues. Any of the above items, either filled with stones or adhesives to hold the flowers to increase stability are also prohibited. This also includes plastic containers and vessels. Although these are not normally breakable, they are bio-degradable when exposed to the elements for extended periods.
- (v) Monumental Masons provide a range of polished granite and marble vases specifically designed for grave usage. Also, vase recesses can be incorporated into the grave during the construction process. The Trust recommends and encourages these options which provides durable and lasting receptacles for floral tributes and also meets the safety and risks requirements concerning breakage and damage as detailed within this policy.
- (vi) A small number of older graves have domed glass covered wreaths placed on the grave lids. Due to their age and constant exposure to the elements, from time to time these glass domed covers become damaged or broken. Once damage has occurred, these will be removed for safety reasons.
- (vii) Plant containers and receptacles, regardless of their type or size that are used to hold pot plants are not permitted on or around graves. In most instances, these are left unattended which results in the eventual death of the plant. These then become unsightly and may also create safety concerns. Seeds from some of these plants may also disperse, become invasive and result in noxious vegetation infestations within the confines of the Cemetery which may then require expensive control measures.

D. Grave Perimeters

- (i) Decorative borders, kerbing, tiles, bricks, rocks, stones and pebbles are not permitted around the perimeter of graves. These may impede mowing and ground maintenance by Cemetery staff and also create tripping hazards.
- (ii) Wind chimes/devises, solar items, flags, mirror or reflective objects are not to be attached or suspended from trees, bushes, shrubs, fences or hedges adjacent to graves as these may pose a safety hazard for Cemetery staff and visitors.

E. Fire Restrictions

The burning of candles, incense sticks, oil burners, sparkles, and other flammable items/material is not permitted, not only for safety reasons but also as Beechworth is zoned as a designated “high risk” bushfire area. *However, see “Chinese Section” under General Cemetery.*

F. Unauthorised Structures

Monuments installed must be constructed by a registered Monumental Mason recognised by The Beechworth Cemetery Trust. No monument is to be installed without the approval of the Secretary of the Trust. This ensures that the monument is properly constructed and does not present a potential safety issue or risk now or into the future. Any unauthorised structure erected may be removed by the Cemetery Trust at the expense of the person/persons concerned. There are however, regulations in regards to the size, shape, type and colour of Headstones within the Lawn Section of the Cemetery.

G. Food and Beverages

Food and Beverages placed on or around graves are not permitted. This includes confectionary, cakes, biscuits, soft drink and alcohol either in cans, plastic containers or glass bottles. All food deteriorates, which may result in the staining of graves and can also attract unwanted insects, ant nests and vermin. Beverage containers look unsightly and are considered to be a safety risk due to possible breakage. *However, see “Chinese Section” under General Cemetery.*

4. MEMORIAL WALL

The Memorial Wall consists of multiple niches that hold the interned ashes of the deceased following a cremation. A small brass plaque seals the face of each interment niche which is inscribed with the burial and personal details of each deceased person. In some instances, small metal “tubular” or “cup” type vases have been attached to the wall beside a number of these brass plaques. As a matter of courtesy, family, friends and visitors who attend the Wall are required to respect adjacent Memorial Wall cremation niches as follows:

- (i) Only one small “tubular” or “cup” type vase may be secured to the side of each niche. This then provides space for a similar vase to be installed beside an adjoining niche that may belong to the family of other cremated persons.
- (ii) Only small sprays of flowers that do not impinge on adjacent niches are to be used.

5. LAWN CEMETERY

Given the layout, nature and purpose of the Lawn Cemetery, there are restrictions on the number of vases that can be used. Both “Headstone” and “Desk” monuments are supported on concrete plinths. To enable mowing

and ground maintenance, no vases, ornaments, figurines, statuettes, terracotta, ceramics, pottery, terrariums, urns, photo frames, candles, toys, flags, solar items, wind chime/devices are permitted on the concrete plinths. The restriction on vase numbers is as follows:

A. Headstone Section

Most “Headstones” have vase provision within the granite support base in the form of two circular vase recesses for the holding of flowers. These are to be used only, with no additional free standing vases, ornaments and items permissible. The Lawn Cemetery is a “glass free” area.

B. Desk Section

Each “Desk” is separated from the reverse side grave by a small polished granite divider. These dividers have two vase recesses for the holding of flowers, one for each grave. Therefore, only one vase recess can be used for each grave. Again, no additional free standing vases, ornaments and items are permissible. No vases, items or objects are to be placed on or attached to the top of the polished granite dividers between the provided vase recesses. As with the Headstone Section, the Desk Section is “glass free”.

6. GENERAL CEMETERY

A. The Beechworth Cemetery Trust reserves the right to remove any items that have been listed as prohibited within this policy, i.e. unsecure glass jars, ornaments, items etc. In the interest of safety for all users of the Cemetery, the following process has been adopted:

- (i) Random removal of items if and when they are detected; and
- (ii) Annually, as part of a general safety audit review, a public notice advising the community of the scope of this annual audit will be placed in the local newspaper. Although there are no restrictions on the number of vases that may be placed on graves, (unlike the Lawn Section as detailed above), visitors are required to respect adjacent graves and access to them by other users.

B. Chinese Section

This section of the Cemetery contains two very rare hexagonal Chinese burning towers built in 1857. These towers have internal burning chambers where paper prayers and offerings to the dead were burned. Meals for the dead were often left on the altar behind the Burning Towers. These customs continue today on a limited basis, usually by Chinese visitors to Beechworth who burn small paper prayers and occasionally place fruit and small food offerings on the altar. Given that the Cemetery Trust respects and facilitates the burial and funeral customs, beliefs and traditions of all denominations and nationalities, the Trust therefore sanctions these Chinese traditions. These are the only exceptions to the “Fire Restrictions” and “Food & Beverages” clauses as detailed within this policy.

POLICY CLARIFICATION AND CONCERNS

7. If the contents of this policy creates any issues or concerns that may require further clarification or additional information by Cemetery users, then these should be directed to [“The Trust Secretary”](#).

Authority:

- A. Occupational Health & Safety Act - 2004 (Vic)
- B. Occupational Health & Safety Regulation – 2007
- C. The Australian Standard on Good Governance Principles
- D. Cemeteries and Crematoria Regulations – 2005 (Schedule 6, Reg. 40, Pt 3)
- E. Beechworth Cemetery Trust meeting – 17/11/2014