Chassell Township Cemetery
Green Burial Section Rules

(Adopted on April, 10, 2016 and incorporated in Ordinance No. 04102016,
Amended on September 23, 2026)

Purpose and Intent

Green Burial Sections of the Chassell Township Cemetery are dedicated to serving individuals and families who desire a natural burial, one in which they can return their bodies to the earth in an ecologically sustainable manner and where the burial grounds will be perpetually maintained as a natural woodland forest.

To honor these intentions, the rules for Green Burial Sections are very different from the conventional burial sections. Chassell Township is committed to maintaining and managing the Green Burial Sections in the manner described by these rules, and lot owners and their families are responsible for knowing and understanding these rules for funeral planning, burial, and memorialization.

While Chassell Township reserves the right to revise these rules if future circumstances should require changes, all due consideration will be given to respect the interests of lot holders, the collective concerns of township residents, and the intention of keeping all rules consistent with sound principles of natural burial, ecological sustainability, and woodland forest grounds.

Green Burial Section Costs & Lot Exchanges

Lot prices and burial costs will vary over time and may significantly differ from conventional lot and burial costs. Please consult the current Green Section Price List for up-to-date cost figures, including additional fees for weekend, holiday, and winter burials.

If needed, lot owners and/or their representatives are permitted to exchange lots between green burial and conventional sections. If the replacement lot prices are currently higher than what was paid for the original lot(s), that additional cost must be paid. No refunds will be made if replacement lot prices are less than what was paid for the original lot(s).

All Burial and Memorial Materials Must be Natural

As detailed in subsequent rules, all burial and memorial materials must be natural and biodegradable. Lot owners and their families should pre-plan carefully with their funeral director to assure compliance at the time of burial. They are also encouraged to select materials, including permanent grave markers, that are local, organic, and/or sustainable in origin.

It is understood that some natural burials will include non-biodegradable medical implants. Except where removal is required by law, the choice of inclusion or removal of internal, non-natural medical components is at the discretion of the lot owner and his/her family.

The Green Burial Section is intended exclusively for full body, non-toxic natural burials that will experience natural decomposition. Cremains or conventionally embalmed bodies are not permitted, and if natural burial is no longer possible it is expected that lot owners and/or their families will

exchange their Green Burial Section lots for lots in conventional sections of the cemetery. However, as detailed in these rules further below, a cremation or conventionally embalmed body of a lot owner may be permitted in the Green Burial Section in certain rare and exceptional cases for life partners/spouses.

General Maintenance of Green Burial Sections

Green Burial Sections will be generally maintained as natural woodland forest, as follows:

- Trees will be minimally managed to assure their best health and natural life cycles, including allowing leaves, branches, and deadfalls to decompose naturally. Diseased trees may be treated or removed to protect the health of the forest.
- No grass or ground covers will be planted, mowed, or otherwise maintained or permitted.
- Leaves will not be raked or removed, but instead allowed to decompose and naturally build the forest soil.
- Growth of native forest ground cover plants will be allowed to happen naturally
- After a block of graves is deemed full and machine/equipment access is not longer required for burials, native tree seedling may be permitted to grow naturally throughout the section and to fill in the forest canopy.
- A rough, unpaved 10-foot roadway through sections will be minimally maintained for use by burial equipment, trucks or similar passenger vehicles, and pedestrians.

Maintenance/Care of Individual Lots

Individual lots must also be maintained as natural woodland forest. Lot owners and their families are expected to support that ecosystem in the following ways:

- Except when required by law (e.g. flags for veterans), all grave decorations and non-permanent memorials must be natural, biodegradable, and not significantly detract from the natural woodland forest setting of the burial ground. Items not in compliance will be removed by cemetery staff. Please ask cemetery staff for permission to place any items that may be objectionable due to their size or nature.
- Leaf litter and normal forest debris must be allowed to accumulate on top of graves to build the soil and support natural decomposition.
- No grass, shrubs, trees, plants, or permanent flowers may be planted on graves.
- Growth of native forest ground cover plants must be allowed to happen naturally on graves.
- Recently filled graves will simply be recovered with their existing leaf litter and may be left with a mound of soil on top to allow for settling over time.
- Sunken graves may be refilled up to ground level to assure pedestrian safety.
- Once an entire block of graves has been filled, trees may be permitted to naturally regenerate through that section, including on top of graves.
- If lots remain unused 25 years after purchase and no owners can be located, they may be deemed abandoned for the purpose of allowing forest regeneration in their block.

Permanent Monuments/Grave Markers

Except when required by law, permanent grave markers in Green Burial lots are optional and neither encouraged or discouraged. They are permitted as follows:

- All permanent monuments/markers must be flush with the ground.
- Only one marker is allowed per lot, no larger than 2ft. x 3ft. in size.

- Markers will not be maintained by cemetery staff and may eventually be covered by the forest soil. However, families are permitted to maintain them for as long as they wish.
- It is recommended that lot owners and families consider using materials that are as local and/or sustainable in origin as possible.

Burial Preparations and Materials

Because natural burial is significantly different from conventional burial and requires much tighter time and material constraints, it is essential that lot owners plan ahead with their funeral director and fully communicate the rules for burial preparation and materials to their family and friends. The following rules will apply:

- Green Burial Section lots are generally intended for non-embalmed bodies, but bodies embalmed with certified green/non-toxic/biodegradable fluids are permitted. Be sure to pre-plan carefully with your funeral director to determine if green embalming is likely to be needed and prepare accordingly.
- No vaults or grave liners of any kind are permitted.
- Sturdy containers for burials (untreated wood coffins, wicker or grass baskets, bamboo or cardboard boxes, etc.) must be made of biodegradable materials. To minimize settling/sinking of graves, it is recommended that they be appropriately sized for the body with minimal empty space inside.
- Solid/sturdy containers must fit easily within the standard grave hole size of 3ft. X 7ft. For burials requiring a larger grave hole size, advance notice to the Sexton is required.
- Shroud burials using wrappings such as cloth, blankets, or quilts are permitted when made of biodegradable materials (but see special procedures/rules below regarding shroud burials).
- Cremains and conventionally embalmed (toxic) bodies are not permitted in Green Burial Sections. However, at the discretion of the Sexton, an exception may be made to this rule only when all of the following four criteria apply:
    1. The deceased already owned a lot in a Green Burial Section and had filed plans with his/her funeral director detailing clear intentions for a natural burial.
    2. The deceased has a life partner or spouse who is already interred in an adjacent lot and the intention was to be buried alongside one another.
    3. The body of the deceased was cremated or conventionally embalmed outside of the control of the deceased, his/her family, or representatives (generally when ordered by authorities or required by law, such as embalming in the case of a body that could not be readily identified).
    4. The cremation or conventional embalming of the body is not the result of elective changes in burial plans by the lot owner or his/her family, family disagreements, lack of prior planning, or other controllable circumstances.
    5. Once the body is interned it is prohibited to disintern unless required by court order, state or federal law, etc.

  Furthermore:
    - All other natural burial rules apply, such as all biodegradable materials and no vaults.
    - To conserve limited space for natural burials, the Sexton may request that permitted cremains be interred within or scattered upon the same lot as the naturally interred life partner/spouse (or in areas specially designated for cremains), and the unused lot be repurchased by the Township for sale to another person seeking natural burial.

- When permission is denied, the lot in the Green Burial Section can be exchanged for a lot in a conventional section of the cemetery.
- Denials by the Sexton can be appealed to the Township Board for final determination.

Standard Burial/Interment Procedures (Weekdays/Warm Weather Season)
During weekdays and warm weather conditions (i.e. not winter), the following rules apply to opening/closing of graves and interment of bodies:

- The standard grave hole size will be 3 ft. x 7 ft., centered within a 5ft. x 9ft. lot. For burials requiring larger grave holes, advance notice to the Sexton is required.
- Grave depth will be in the range of 3 to 4 feet, at the discretion of the Sexton but respecting the desire for natural burials to be no deeper than necessary.
- Only cemetery staff or approved contractors will be permitted to dig graves and will use a backhoe and/or other machinery as needed.
- Because natural burials are vault-less, during periods of rain or wet snow cemetery staff and funeral directors will do their best to keep water from pooling in graves prior to burial but cannot guarantee complete dryness.
- Open grave sites will be "natural" in appearance at the time of burial. This means that grave soil will be piled openly on site, the forest floor and pathways may be uneven, wet, and/or muddy, and attendees must dress accordingly.
- Because section roadways are unpaved and inaccessible to hearses and ordinary passenger vehicles, delivery of burials to graveside will require capable pallbearers and/or alternative vehicles (e.g. 4-wheel drive trucks). Families and funeral directors are also responsible for addressing any/all accessibility needs of attendees.
- Burials employing just shrouds or insufficiently sturdy containers will require strapping the body to a trundle board for interment. Funeral directors are responsible for providing trundle boards and assuring that they are of appropriate size and strength and will easily fit into the standard grave hole size of 3 ft. x 7 ft. Trundle boards will remain in the grave at burial unless they can be easily and respectfully removed.
- Interment of all burials into graves will be conducted by cemetery staff using conventional equipment. Exceptions may be permitted by the Sexton only when funeral directors or other organizations have trained personnel and proven competency for interring natural/vaultless burials.
- Graves may be filled in by hand by attendees. Funeral directors are responsible for making sure attendees are properly equipped.

Special Rules/Procedures/Considerations for Weekend/Holiday/Winter Burial
Weekend, holiday, and wintertime burials are permitted in Green Burial Sections at additional costs, and every effort will be made to facilitate such burials when needed. However, given the tight timeframes for natural burial, the fact that Cemetery staff must rely on private contractors for opening/closing graves during special time periods, and the many potential complications that come with our extensive winter season, Chassell Township cannot 100% guarantee this service in a timely manner. Lot owners and their families should work closely with their funeral director to make clear plans that allow fast action in wintertime, and to plan for contingency measures that can be employed when delays are encountered, such as green embalming, freezing, or other methods of non-toxic preservation until burial is possible.

The following additional rules apply to weekend, holiday, and winter burial:

- Opening and closing of graves that must take place on weekends, holidays, and/or throughout the winter will be performed by private contractors, for additional charges and at their declared rates at the time of need.
- Cemetery staff will maintain a list of approved contractors; Chassell Township is not responsible if no contractor is available or willing to take on the job at a particular time.
- During winter months, cemetery roads beyond the vault will not be plowed for passenger vehicles/hearses; contractors will only clear enough snow for equipment access and delivery of burial to graveside with a 4-wheel drive vehicle. For attendee access to graveside, families and funeral directors should assess current conditions and prepare with appropriate winter gear/equipment (e.g. winter boots, snowshoes, skis, sleds, etc.).
- In times of extreme winter weather, it may be necessary to disallow hand filling of graves and expedite the process with machinery.
- When bodies embalmed with certified green/non-toxic/biodegradable fluids must be stored in the winter vault for any reason or length of time, they will be enclosed in an additional container chosen by Cemetery staff to assure health and safety.

********** **Agreement** **********

By signing below, I attest that I have received and read the above rules, procedures, and recommendations that govern my lot(s) in the Green Burial Sections of the Chassell Township Cemetery and I agree to all terms as specified.

Lot(s) Identification: _____

_____
(Name of Primary Owner, Printed)

_____ _____
(Signature) (Date)
Phone and Address: _____

_____
(Name of Additional Owner, Printed)

_____ _____
(Signature) (Date)
Phone and Address: _____

_____
(Name of Additional Owner, Printed)

_____ _____
(Signature) (Date)
Phone and Address: _____

_____
(Name of Additional Owner, Printed)

_____ _____
(Signature) (Date)
Phone and Address: _____

Chassell Township

PO Box 438, Chassell, MI 49916
906-523-4000. website: ChassellTownship.org

(Approved January 10, 2024)
All Payments are made to Chassell Township
Holidays Observed follow the Federal Reserve Board

Chassell Cemetery Contact Information

Craig Austin, Sexton; personal phone: 370-5827 (will return calls within 24 hours)
Township Office: 523-4000; Department of Public Works: 906-481-4000

Definition of Resident-Current resident of Chassell or lived in Chassell for a minimum of 5 years.

Price List for Traditional (Vault) Burial Section
Traditional (Vault) and Cremains Burial Prices
$250 Township Residents, $450 Non-Residents
$100 Cremains Lots (2' x 2')

Opening/Closing- $450 Residents, $500 Non-residents
Interment (provided by Funeral Home)
$100 Cremains Opening/Closing (weekends or holidays $125)
$25 Winter Vault

Price List for Green Burial section
Green Burial Section Lot Prices
$250 Township Residents, $450 Non-residents

Green Burial Section Opening/Closing, Interment, & Storage Costs
Note: private contractor fees listed below for grave opening/closing on weekends, holidays, and winter season are only estimates and represent neither a minimum or maximum price. Funeral directors must contact cemetery staff for exact pricing at time of need.

Weekdays, Warm Weather Season
Opening/Closing - $450 Resident, $500 Non-resident
$250 Interment Device Rental

Weekends & Holidays, Warm Weather Season
Opening/Closing - $450 Resident, $500 Non-resident
$250 Interment Device Rental
$500 (Maximum) Private Contractor Fee

Winter Season (exact dates as declared by Cemetery Staff according to weather conditions)
Opening/Closing - $450 Resident, $500 Non-resident
$250 Interment Device Rental
$600 (Maximum) Private Contractor Fee

Winter Vault Storage for only green/non-toxic/biodegradable embalmed bodies - $50