

# Introduction to the KGBA Green Burial Planner

Keweenaw Green Burial Alliance

[www.kgba.weebly.com](http://www.kgba.weebly.com)

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For the many reasons listed below, it is essential that residents of the Keweenaw Peninsula who desire a green/natural burial plan ahead very carefully. It is also essential to review your intentions with prospective funeral directors well ahead of time, to assure that you can find one who is comfortable facilitating what you and your family desire.

Our “Green Burial Planner” is designed to help you prioritize the most significant green/natural burial considerations and to document your plans accordingly. It also allows you to specify all other funeral/burial/memorial considerations in just this one document.

We also recommend that you carefully review the choices and directives documented in your planner with your immediate family, with any other designated agents you may have, and with your choice of funeral home/director, with final copies retained by all concerned parties.

## **Reasons why it is essential to plan ahead for Green/Natural Burial**

**Time Constraints:** Some (but not all) interpretations of funeral regulations assert that families have only 48 hours to either have a body embalmed or turned over for final disposition (cremation or burial). And even if green embalming is acceptable to you, the time frame may be more limited than what is possible with conventional forms of embalming.

**Green Cemetery Options are Limited:** At this time, only a few local cemeteries permit some form of green/natural burial, and each has their own special parameters that funeral directors must follow.

**Options/Choices Vary Widely in Conjunction with Green/Natural Burial:** Not all funeral homes and directors will offer the same range of choices for funeral services, burial options, and material items in conjunction with green/natural burial. It is entirely possible that your preferred green/sustainable burial materials will need to be obtained ahead of time.

**Definitions of Green/Natural Burial Differ:** While the current range of conventional burial practices are consistent and well understood at this time, what is meant by green or natural burial can be very different from person to person. It is essential to spell out the details and practices that matter most to you.

**Winter Burial Options are Limited and Unpredictable:** Not all local cemeteries offering green burial also allow winter burial, which means that some form of embalming and storage may be needed if you die in the winter season. Given that it is hard to predict your time of death, it is best to make winter burial decisions and cemetery choices well ahead of time. And if winter burial complications emerge, your family and/or designated agent will need additional guidance to make appropriate decisions on your behalf.

**Green Burial is NOT the current “Norm:”** Despite being the traditional form of burial for most people of the world, green/natural burial is still “new” to the Keweenaw and uncommon throughout our American culture. This includes funeral directors, who are still gaining experience with these practices. With green burial there will be different sets of choices available to survivors and less flexibility in scheduling than what most Americans have become accustomed to. It is essential that your family, friends, and funeral director clearly understand your wishes as they quickly finalize the details of how they will care for your body, assemble the appropriate burial materials, and plan a memorial service.

# Green Burial Planner

Developed by the Keweenaw Green Burial Alliance  
www.kgba.weebly.com  
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## Basic Plan Information

**Plan Holder (person for whom this burial/funeral plan has been created):**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name, printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/Other Contact Info: \_\_\_\_\_

**Family / Designated Funeral Representative / Survivors who will also hold a copy of this plan:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone/Contact Info

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone/Contact Info

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone/Contact Info

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone/Contact Info

**Funeral Home currently holding a copy of this plan:**

Funeral Home: \_\_\_\_\_

Funeral Director: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/Other Contact Info: \_\_\_\_\_



## I. Family / Designated Funeral Representative / Other Survivors

Given the potential time constraints and the uncommon practices associated with green/natural burial, it is important to be clear ahead of time who the major participants might be in your burial/funeral activities. That includes who should make any remaining decisions, who would most need or want to be aware of your burial, and who might need to make quick decisions about their travel plans in order to attend.

Under Michigan Law, when you decease your body becomes the "property" of your next of kin, and such persons have the right to direct the final disposition of it according to a specific order of succession: legal spouse, adult children, adult grandchildren, parents, grandparents, siblings, etc. At the same time, all activities must take place under the supervision of a licensed funeral director, who is responsible for completing legal paperwork and maintaining certain standards of care.

Michigan law also allows for you to designate a legally binding "Funeral Representative" and successor representatives that can supersede the next of kin succession. Such designations may include family members, but do not have to. These designations do, however, have to be in writing and meet a number of legal requirements, including criteria for your representative, witnesses, and notarization. If you wish to designate one or more funeral representatives, be sure to finalize that document with your funeral director of choice, who will have information and forms available and can help you complete them correctly.

**Note: please enter N/A for any categories that are not applicable to your circumstances**

### Legally Designated Funeral Representative(s), with copy of valid forms attached

(Note: these persons may also be listed again below with a specific relationship.)

1. Representative and best contact info: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Successor Representative and best contact info: \_\_\_\_\_

### Legal Spouse

Name and best contact Info: \_\_\_\_\_

**Life Partner (Important Note: this person has no legal standing for directing your burial arrangements unless legally designated as your Funeral Representative)**

Name and best contact Info: \_\_\_\_\_

### Children

1. Name and best contact info: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Name and best contact info: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Check here if a list of additional names is appended:

### Other Essential Next of Kin

1. Name/relationship/best contact info: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Name/relationship/best contact info: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Check here if an additional names list is appended:

**Other Close Survivors:** should it be necessary to move quickly in terms of your burial (like within 48 hours), please identify any persons (in addition to the above) who should be contacted as soon as possible about arrangements:

1. Name/relationship/best contact info: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Name/relationship/best contact info: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Check here if an additional names list is appended:

## II. Discretion Afforded to Representatives

**Special Instructions!** Please check either #1 or #2 below. Your answers here provide guidance for how your funeral representative and/or next of kin should interpret all of your burial/funeral/ceremonial choices, including your priorities for green burial practices.

- #1: Taking into account my explicit wishes for green/natural burial, I believe that burial and funeral arrangements are for the benefit of the living and I permit my representative to also take into consideration the circumstances of my death and the needs of my survivors listed in Section I. Unless I specifically note that something is not acceptable, my choices in all burial and funeral criteria are to be considered my own strong preferences and priorities, but not absolute requirements if good reasons exist for making adjustments.
- #2: What I indicate below are my *explicit, non-negotiable* personal wishes for my burial and funeral arrangements. I would like them followed as closely as possible, with minimal modifications made only when legally necessary and determined solely by my funeral representative or applicable next of kin.

## III. Priorities/Directives for Green/Natural Burial Criteria

**Cemetery Choice (note: know your cemetery rules; green/natural options vary widely)**

- I already own a plot at: \_\_\_\_\_ (please attach copy of certificate)
- I do not own a plot, but prefer this cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_

**Special instructions!** For each of the four sections below, please indicate the following

- For any item you consider "Not Acceptable," please enter "N/A" in front of it
- Prioritize the remaining items, beginning with 1 for most desirable (1, 2, 3, etc.)

### Priority of Acceptable Options for Preservation/Preparation of your Body

- \_\_\_ I want no bodily preservation at all – please just bury me
- \_\_\_ You can use any cooling necessary to allow time for my other wishes (within Michigan law)
- \_\_\_ You can use green embalming of the circulatory system and/or body cavity
- \_\_\_ You can cremate my body and then bury the cremains in the greenest way still possible, if circumstances require it for a good reason
- \_\_\_ You can use conventional embalming and then bury me in the greenest way still possible, if circumstances require it for a good reason

### Priority of Acceptable Biodegradable Materials/Containers

- \_\_\_ You can use a shroud (and any necessary trundle for carrying/interment)
- \_\_\_ You can use a wood coffin
- \_\_\_ You can use a basket made of wicker or other biodegradable materials
- \_\_\_ You can use a cardboard cremation box or liner from a viewing casket
- \_\_\_ You can use a biodegradable urn for my cremains
- \_\_\_ You can scatter my cremains
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_



**Priority of Acceptable Winter Burial Options**

- Please bury me locally in winter at whatever cemetery offers winter green burial, but preferably at the cemetery I have listed above
- ...But if local winter burial is not possible....
- you can transport my body to another cemetery for an immediate winter burial
- please use a green embalming fluid and bury me in the spring *only* in my preferred cemetery above
- you can cremate me and bury me in the greenest way still possible
- you can use a conventional embalming fluid and bury me in the greenest way still possible
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Priority of Acceptable Forms of Memorialization (Permanent/Temporary/Biodegradable):**

- Stone, notes: \_\_\_\_\_
- Wood, notes: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (or already purchased): \_\_\_\_\_
- None
- Let my survivors choose the memorialization, if any

**IV. Additional Funeral/Ceremonial Arrangements**

**Specific Funeral/Ceremony Criteria**

**Special instructions!** For each section below, please indicate "N/A" for items not acceptable to you, leave them blank if you don't care either way, and prioritize any preferred items beginning with 1 for highest priority (1, 2, 3, etc.).

**Viewing of Body**

- Allow full public viewing
- Allow viewing only by my family and closest survivors/participants listed in Section I
- Allow viewing by my immediate family only
- Allow viewing by only the following specific person(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Allow no viewing – please shroud or casket me completely as soon as possible
- Other considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

**Location of Visitation (with or without viewing of the body)**

- Funeral Home: \_\_\_\_\_
- My own Home
- Church or Other Facility: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other site(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- No visitation, please

**Officiant**

- I would like the following person(s) to officiate (include name, contact info, & church or organization): \_\_\_\_\_
- I would like the officiant to be determined by my church: \_\_\_\_\_
- I would like no officiant of any kind – please just bury me and talk amongst yourselves
- Other considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

**Ceremonial Arrangements:**

**Special instructions!** For each item below, please check the box if that item is acceptable and provide details if desired. If an item is NOT acceptable to you, please do NOT check the box and instead enter "N/A" on the line provided for details.

Specific rituals (spiritual, military, other). I would like this to include:

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Specific prayers and/or readings. I would like to have included:

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Music. I would like to have included:

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Flowers or other Decorations. I would like to have included:

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Pallbearers. I would like to include the following persons:

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Other things I would like to have included in the ceremony:

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If cremation is an option, I would like the disposition of my cremains to be as follows:

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I would like no ceremony – please just bury me and talk amongst yourselves

**Please describe any additional Funeral/Ceremony Arrangements or Preferences:**

## **V. Organ/Body Donation or other Special Instructions**

If you are also planning for organ donation, want to donate your body to science, or have any other special pre-disposition plans, please describe the details of your plans below. You, your family, and your funeral director will need to make a record of how those activities should take priority in relation to the above instructions and include all pertinent information to help assure successful completion of your plans.

## **VI. Death Occurring Out of State/Out of Area**

It is entirely possible that you may die out of state or out of your local area, which can add complications to green/natural burial wishes. For example, the extra time it might take to return your body, or a need to transport your body across state lines, could require embalming or prohibitive extra expense. Please discuss such possibilities with your family and your funeral director, and record below how you would prefer they approach such complications.

## VII. Death Certificate & Obituary Information

**Death Certificate:** whether you choose to have an obituary or not, your funeral director is required by law to report certain demographic and historical facts about you for your death certificate. You can provide this information ahead of time or it can be provided by an informant after your death. Please consult with your funeral director about how he/she generally prefers to collect that information.

**Obituary:** Obituaries are optional, but if you have yours already prepared you can attach it to this document and/or provide electronic copies to your designated agent, primary survivors, and/or preferred funeral director. When you decease, your funeral director can review it with your funeral representative and other survivors and update it if necessary.

If you wish at this time to provide basic information for future preparation of your obituary, please record it below or attach an additional page. Or, your funeral director may have a website where you can enter such information for their records. Typical information includes:

- Your day or year of birth and birth location
- Your parents
- Your spouse and date of marriage
- Your children (and their spouses/life partners) and grandchildren
- Your siblings and their spouses/life partners
- Other special survivors
- High school and other educational achievements
- Work history
- Church and membership in other community organizations
- Organization(s) to which people can make donations in your name
- Anything else that reflects important aspects of your life