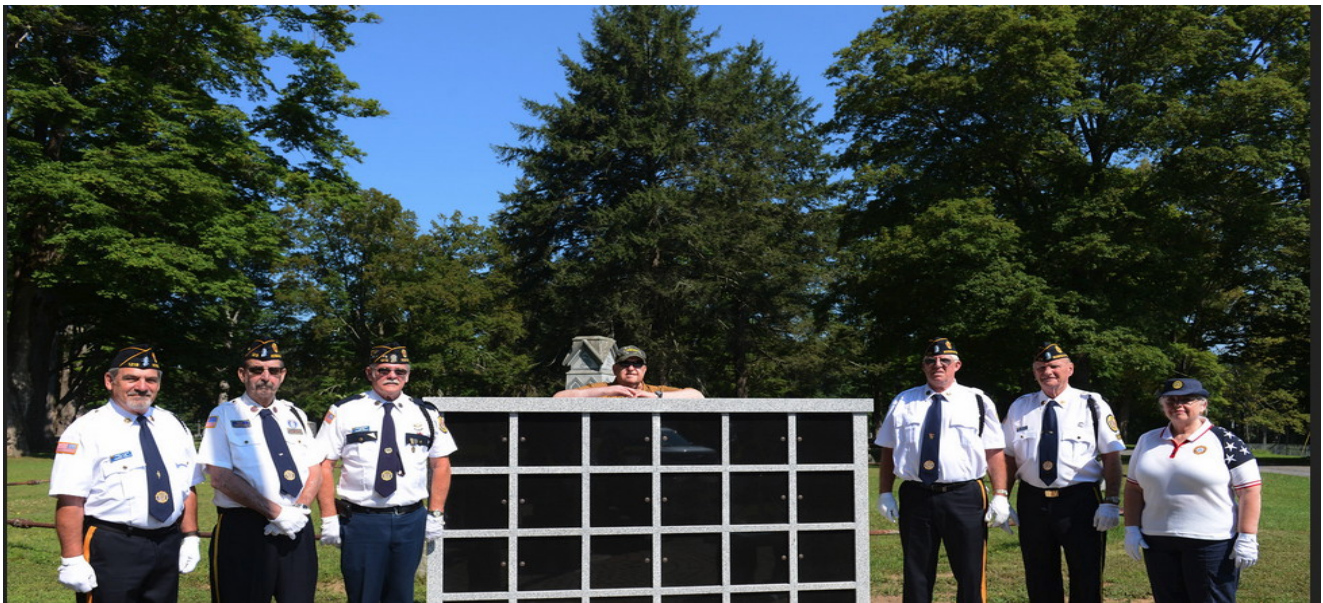


Rosendale Plains Cemetery joins natural burial movement



By [Diane Pineiro-Zucker](#), Daily Freeman

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A field used for the natural burial section at the Rosendale Plains Cemetery in Tillson. Tania Barricklo-Daily Freeman

TILLSON, N.Y. >> The Rosendale Plains Cemetery on Springtown Road in Tillson is joining a burgeoning natural burial movement that only just began early this century.

With the opening of the cemetery's "[green and natural burial section](#)," Rosendale Plains joins the [Rhinebeck Cemetery](#) in offering alternatives to conventional burial. And, according to Tillson cemetery president Dick Hermance and Rhinebeck Cemetery president Suzanne Kelly, there has been no shortage of interest locally and from further afield.

Kelly, who is also the author of "[Greening Death: Reclaiming Burial Practices and Restoring Our Tie to the Earth](#)," said cemeteries are seeing "a lot more sales in natural burial grounds than in conventional" burial sites.

Both presidents say they've fielded inquiries from interested customers from outside the area. Hermance said he receives two or three calls a week inquiring about the site.

According to the [Green Burial Council](#), "Green or natural burial is a way of caring for the dead with minimal environmental impact that aids in the conservation of natural resources, reduction of carbon emissions, protection of worker health and the restoration and/or preservation of habitat."

The Rosendale Plains Cemetery's green and natural burial section places an emphasis on being environmentally-friendly while maintaining a close connection with nature, Hermance said.

“Everything associated with the natural burial section is natural and native to the area,” the website states. From the site’s stone monument, procured from the A.J. Snyder Cement Mines, to cedar signage preserved with natural raw linseed oil, efforts are made to reach the cemetery’s goal of “protecting workers’ health, avoiding contact and interaction with toxic embalming fluids, reducing carbon emissions and conserving natural resources.”

The section includes 5-by-10-foot plots in a mowed field and 10-by-10-foot plots in the woods. Single plots cost \$550 and require installation of a 12-by-24-inch grave marker, which can be purchased locally for about \$250, according to the website.

Hermance said there are currently five individuals interred in the woods and two in the field and that about 20 plots have been sold in advance.

He said most bodies are interred using a shroud and that all caskets, when they are used, must be “non-toxic, non-hazardous and natural/plant derived with shrouds permissible. Acceptable materials include untreated softwoods, wool, fiber, cloth, cardboard, sea grass, bamboo, wicker, hemp and paper mache.

If embalming is desired, families must request that funeral homes use organic embalming fluids, Hermance said.

Cremation remains, known as cremains in the industry, may be interred on the site in “environmentally sensitive” containers, he said. Metal and plastic containers are not allowed.

According to cemetery rules published on the Rosendale site, pesticides are prohibited, living and existing trees must remain in place and open areas will be mowed on the regular cemetery schedule. Hermance said grave markers are required and the stone must be flush to the ground and not be machine cut or polished.

In keeping with the cemetery’s natural theme, no artificial flowers or decorations are allowed although “native wreaths and flowers are fine.” A list of acceptable native plants is [available online](#).

Green burial is not all that’s new at the Rosendale Plains Cemetery.

The site, which is directly across the street from the Rosendale-Tillson American Legion Post 1219, recently opened a [veterans’ columbarium](#) for the interment of veterans’ cremation remains.

Before the columbarium was installed, local veterans were usually interred at the veteran’s cemetery in New Paltz.

The women’s auxiliary donated benches for the columbarium and Chilcott Towing brought in a crane to install the monument, saving the cemetery \$2,000, Hermance said.

On a recent visit, several members of the American Legion post gathered to express their appreciation and excitement about the granite monument, which contains 40 drawers which will eventually be filled with the cremains of veterans and their spouses.

Larry Craig, of Rosendale, who was stationed from 1965 to 1968 at the Panama Canal, said he plans for he and his wife to someday be interred at the hometown monument.

Harold Rosenkranse, also of Rosendale, the post's membership chairman and color guard captain, was stationed in Vietnam from 1962 until 1968. Rosenkranse also said he hopes to be interred someday in the columbarium along with his wife Dorothy.

Internment will be free for veterans, Rosenkranse said, and the Veteran's Administration will provide a engraved plate for the door.

"It's an honor for the veterans to be recognized," he said. "And this is just another step in the right direction."