

Denman Island Natural Burial Cemetery

*Caring for the Community
and the Environment*

The Denman Island Natural Burial Cemetery
is a community cemetery
for residents and landowners of Denman Island
and their immediate families.

6400 Denman Rd, Denman Island, BC, Canada
www.dinbc.ca

The Denman Island Natural Burial Cemetery opened in 2015. It is operated by the Denman Island Memorial Society (DIMS), a non-profit society established in 2009 to develop and manage the Cemetery.

If you need assistance to arrange a burial,
contact us at 250-335-1786.

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WHAT IS NATURAL BURIAL?

Natural burial, or “green burial,” refers to returning a body to the earth as simply as possible. Across North America, people interested in protecting the environment and reducing greenhouse gases are questioning the practices used in conventional burial. They see natural burial as a more environmentally friendly approach to after-life care.

Natural burial follows several key principles:

- The body is not embalmed.
- The body is wrapped in a garment or shroud made of biodegradable material such as cotton, wool or linen.
- The coffin or other container is biodegradable.
- Concrete vaults are not used to enclose the grave.
- Tombstones are not used to mark the grave.
- Landscaping of the burial ground is minimal.
- No fertilizers or biocides are used.

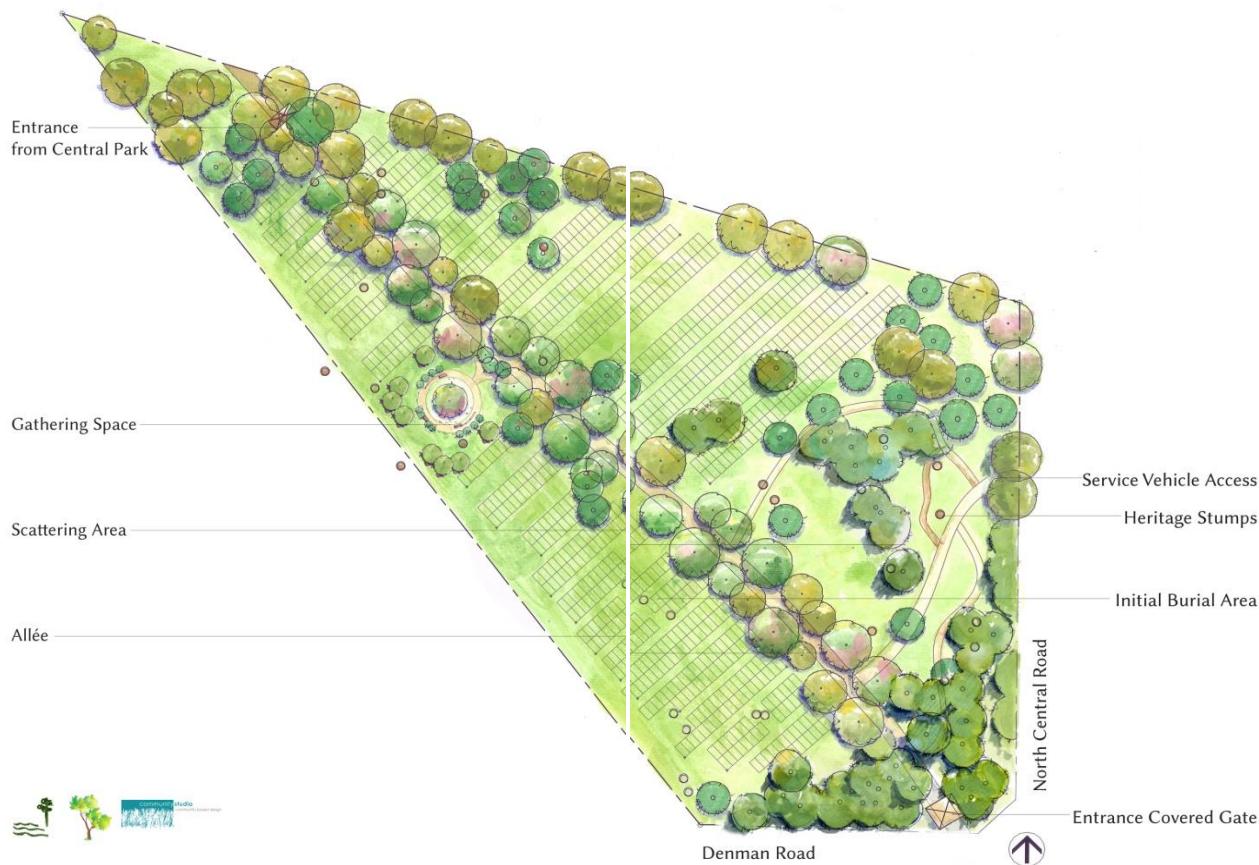
Please contact us if you would like more information about preparing for a natural burial. People making this choice are advised to document their plans, so their families can know of their wishes ahead of time.

To the best of our knowledge, the Denman Island Natural Burial Cemetery is the first newly created, exclusively green burial ground in Canada. The Cemetery is designed to achieve the highest level of the Green Burial Council Standards — the ‘Conservation Burial Ground.’

DESIGN OF THE CEMETERY

The Cemetery property is 1.08 hectares (2.67 acres), and provides for approximately 1,000 graves. The shape of the property is the result of a large marsh to the southwest and the vehicle access for Central Park to the northeast.

Each grave is intended for the remains of one person, whether whole body or cremated remains. About 80% of the graves are in *standard burial plots*, each of which contains one grave. The remaining 20% are in *family burial plots*. Each of these plots can contain up to six graves.



In the areas with standard burial plots, plots are used sequentially, and the land is left undisturbed once the grave has been used. Over time, the native vegetation will regenerate naturally, leading to reforestation of the area.

The family burial plots are located near the open area in the middle of the Cemetery, where they can be accessed easily. These plots are also used sequentially, but the land is again disturbed when the additional family members are buried. Once all of the graves in this area are used, the return of the native vegetation will proceed unimpeded.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR BURIALS

Purchasing the Right of Interment

If you or a family member wishes to be buried in the Denman Island Natural Burial Cemetery, you will need a *Right of Interment*. Contact us to make this purchase.

The *Right of Interment* gives you the *right* to be buried in the Cemetery. It does not give you *ownership* of a specific burial plot. We will assign the location of the burial plot at the time when the *Right of Interment* is exercised.

Also known as a burial right, the *Right of Interment* represents a contract between you and the Denman Island Memorial Society to have either the whole body remains of one person or the cremated remains of one person interred in the Cemetery.

A *Right of Interment* can be purchased on a *pre-need* basis (before a burial is needed) or an *at-need* basis (when a burial is needed). One person can purchase interment rights for up to six graves. The designated user of each grave is specified at the time of purchase. However, a user can be changed later by contacting us and arranging to transfer the interment right to another eligible person.

At the Time of Interment

B.C. law requires that you provide us with a *Disposition Permit* and the relevant authorization before a burial can occur. We will then issue a *Permission to Inter*. Please contact us to have these documents explained in detail.

For whole body burial, the deceased's family is responsible for ensuring that no toxic chemicals are used in preparing the body for burial. As well, the clothing, shroud or quilt used to dress the body and any container used in the burial must be biodegradable.

A container is not required for natural burial. However, if you choose to use one, a cardboard or willow coffin or a simple box of untreated wood can be purchased relatively easily. Contact us to learn more about these options.



Willow coffin made on Denman Island

For the burial of cremated remains, the family must ensure that the container is biodegradable. There is no requirement, however, to use an urn or other container. Cremated remains that are not in a container are placed directly on the soil in the grave.

The family is also responsible for arranging for the safe and dignified transport of human remains to the Cemetery by an authorized person. Contact us if you need help making arrangements for transport.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR BURIALS (CONTINUED)

Once at the Denman Road entrance, a casket or other container can be placed under the gate at the main entrance, until people are ready to assemble at the grave.

The usual way to transport a body to the gravesite is by pallbearers. Families choosing an alternate form of transport, for example, using a horse-drawn wagon, should discuss their plans with us beforehand.



Main entrance gate

Each interment is made in a grave dug to the depth appropriate for natural burial, which is not as deep as for conventional burial. Once the date of the burial is established, we will arrange for the opening and closing of the grave.

Family and friends may assist in the closing of the grave, but you need to arrange for this activity ahead of time.

A packet of native seeds will be available to families who wish to encourage the growth of local wildflowers on the grave. At the right time of year, if so requested, we will plant a native sapling or shrub.

SCATTERING OF CREMATED REMAINS

The Cemetery includes an area for the scattering of cremated remains (ashes). Before the scattering takes place, you will be asked to complete a form recording information about the deceased. We will then issue a *Permission to Scatter Cremated Remains*.

Family members or friends of the deceased choose the place in the Scattering Area and carry out the scattering. After the cremated remains are distributed, they are covered with natural material. We maintain a pile of dried leaves and other vegetation for this purpose. No marker is used, and the remains are not retrievable.

We will discuss the scattering process with you when you purchase the *Permission to Scatter Cremated Remains*. As well, our representative will attend to show you the Scattering Area and answer any questions you may have.



Path leading into the Scattering Area

MEMORIALS

We do not use tombstones or similar memorials at the gravesite. Instead, memorials are placed together in an open area maintained for this purpose.

Families and friends are asked to use this area, rather than visiting the gravesite, when wanting to spend time and remember someone buried in the Cemetery. This arrangement allows the native vegetation to return unimpeded to the areas used for burials.

The Gathering Space is defined by two low, semicircular walls, designed to display about 1,000 small metal plaques. Each plaque provides the name, date of birth, and date of death of one person whose remains are buried or scattered in the Cemetery. If desired, a short epitaph may be included.



Memorial walls and benches in the Gathering Space

A memorial plaque is used for every burial, but its use for scattered ashes is optional. Contact us to learn more about the design of the plaques and the time required to obtain and mount a plaque.



Sample memorial plaque

If requested by the family, a small stone marker may be placed at the edge of an individual burial plot. If you are interested in this option, you need to discuss it with us beforehand. No steps are taken over time to remove vegetation that may cover the marker.

CEREMONIES AND OTHER GATHERINGS

The Gathering Space is suitable for small ceremonies and family gatherings. Seating is available for about ten people. Contact us if you would like to hold a gathering here.

As well, the Gathering Space is a place where people can sit for a while and enjoy the scenery and peaceful atmosphere of the Cemetery. Visitors are asked to respect this area as a place for reflection and to remember the goal of maintaining it as a natural setting.

FEES

The fee for a *Right of Interment* covers the cost of protecting the sanctity of the Cemetery and managing Cemetery operations.

A *Right of Interment* may be purchased on a pre-need or an at-need basis. A right purchased on a pre-need basis covers only the plot fee. Other costs are paid later when arranging the interment. All fees for rights purchased on a pre-need basis are held in a separate trust account until the burials take place.

When a *Right of Interment* is purchased on an at-need basis, the purchaser also pays the fees for opening and closing one grave and for one memorial plaque.

One purchase agreement can include *Rights of Interment* for up to six burials, whether pre-need or at-need, as long as all of the designated users are eligible.

As required by the provincial government, 25% of every plot fee is deposited at the time of the interment into a Care Fund Trust. This money is set aside for cemetery maintenance in the event of abandonment or insolvency. As well, \$10 of the plaque fee goes to the Care Fund Trust.

With a pre-need sale, an administrative fee is charged when the *Right of Interment* is purchased. A similar fee is charged for a *Permission to Scatter Cremated Remains*.

Cemetery fees are reviewed annually by the directors of the Denman Island Memorial Society. For the current Fee Schedule, contact us or visit our website at www.dinbc.ca.

WHO CAN BE BURIED HERE?

The Cemetery is intended for residents and landowners of Denman Island and their immediate families. To qualify, a person must be:

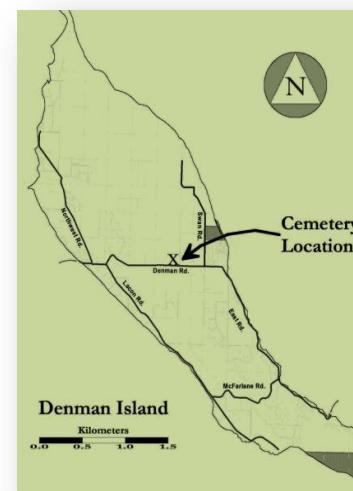
- a) an owner, past or present, of land on Denman Island; or
- b) a full- or part-time resident of Denman Island, past or present; or
- c) a spouse, sibling, parent, child, grandparent, or grandchild of such an owner or resident.

Pets are not eligible.

LOCATION

The Cemetery is located at 6400 Denman Road, in the centre of Denman Island. It borders on Central Park, a 59-hectare recreation/conservation property owned by the Denman Conservancy Association, and is across the road

from the Island's first cemetery.



Three carved figures called "The Ancestors" mark the main entrance at the northwest corner of Denman Road and North Central Road. Just beyond the figures are an information kiosk and the main entrance gate.

RECREATIONAL USE OF THE CEMETERY

As well as serving as a natural burial ground, the Cemetery provides a place for walking and nature observation. Visitors are welcome at any time.

Please be sensitive to the needs of others, especially when a group has gathered to commemorate the life of someone who is recently deceased.

Visitors are asked to stay out of the areas intended for burials. Instead, please spend time in the Gathering Space and enjoy the Garry oak garden being created nearby. Visitors walking in the Scattering Area are asked to respect the sanctity of this area and to stay on the paths.

The northern point of the Cemetery leads into Alder Trail and the network of trails in Central Park. You are welcome to walk through the Cemetery to access these trails.

Feel free to bring your dog when you walk in the Cemetery, but please use a leash at all times. Horseback riding is not allowed.

VEHICLE ACCESS

Vehicles in the Cemetery are restricted to those necessary for the operation of the Cemetery. The vehicle access is off North Central Road and is intended mainly for maintenance and emergencies.

Contact us if you need to bring a vehicle into the Cemetery, for example, to assist a person with a disability.

A UNIQUE CONSERVATION COVENANT

The land for the Cemetery was donated by the Denman Conservancy Association, a local organization established in 1991 to promote ecosystem protection on the Island.

The gift was conditional on establishing a conservation covenant designed to protect the ecological values of the land while allowing its use as a natural burial ground.

The Cemetery falls within the coastal Douglas-fir climatic region, which is home to some of the rarest and most threatened animal and plant species in B.C. The covenant will foster return of the Douglas-fir plant community.

The directors of DCA and the Denman Island Memorial Society conferred for many months to craft the terms of this unique conservation agreement. The covenant was registered early in 2013, at the time of the land transfer.

All activities on the Cemetery land follow a management plan, also adopted in 2013. The plan sets out practices for developing and managing the Cemetery within the terms of the covenant.

THE LONG-TERM PICTURE

The Cemetery is intended to serve the community for 100 years. Slowly, as rows of graves are filled, the natural vegetation will regenerate, starting with grasses, shrubs and red alder trees. Eventually the alders will be crowded out by evergreens, and the burial areas will become forest.

HOW TO CONTACT US

Contact us by email at dinaturalburial@gmail.com or by mail at 6400 Denman Rd, Denman Island, BC, Canada V0R 1T0. We would be happy to provide more information or answer questions.

If you need assistance to arrange a burial,
contact us at 250-335-1786.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Denman Island Natural Burial Cemetery was made possible through the interest and generosity of many people. We are grateful to:

- the Denman Conservancy Association, which donated the Cemetery land;
- the many people who volunteered their time and services;
- the many members of the Denman community who supported the project financially; and
- the following agencies, organizations and businesses that provided funding support:
 - The Real Estate Foundation of B.C.
 - Comox Valley Regional District
 - Denman WORKS!
 - Union Bay Credit Union
 - The Natural Burial Association
 - Piercy's Mount Washington Funeral Home