

# Tips From The Top

[advice from experts]

# 10 TIPS

## For Planning a Cremation Garden

Families who have the cremated remains of a loved one have several options when it comes to choosing what to do with those remains. One of those options is interring the cremated remains in a cremation garden. David G. Ward of Grever and Ward, a cemetery and design planning company in Orchard Park, N.Y., shares some advice on how to go about planning a cremation garden in your cemetery.

### 1. START WITH THE MEMORIAL.

Cremation gardens are designed at a scale that is smaller than full burial sections. In-ground cremation plots are roughly one-third the size of a traditional lot, and memorials need to be downsized accordingly. By selecting smaller upright or flush memorials in advance, the garden can be designed to avoid looking cluttered.

### 2. PLAN BIG; BUILD SMALL.

Expansion is important to plan ahead for, even before the first space of Phase 1 is sold. By developing a multiphased “master plan” for your garden, you will always know where you are going next, and the resulting additions will be seamless.

### 3. DON'T SHORTCHANGE THE LANDSCAPE.

The budget to buy and install a new columbarium should include items to enhance it. By spending 20 to 30 percent more to include walks, benches and pavements, you help guarantee a garden's success. The value of the spaces to be sold is elevated by an attractive landscape. That higher value can more than offset the cost of the

landscape improvements.

### 4. CREATE SPACES, NOT OBJECTS.

The sales appeal and popularity of a garden is a result of how inviting it is. Through the thoughtful placement of landscaping, perimeter niche walls and approach walks, visitors are encouraged to walk into the garden. Considerations such as having a few places to sit and be sheltered from the elements add to a positive experience for visitors.

### 5. TAILOR GARDENS TO THE SITE.

Through the increased popularity of cremation and the competition that followed in manufacturing, columbaria and niche interior systems have become more unique. Niche walls can be adapted to nearly any shape of site or terrain. Local trim materials such as stone veneer can accent a niche wall and provide regional appeal.

### 6. PROVIDE PRODUCT VARIETY.

The wisdom of providing a variety of products in a cremation garden has been stated many times. Cremation customers have more varied preferences, and a new garden is an opportunity to feel out what is popular.

### 7. SHOWCASE GARDENS THROUGH SITE SELECTION.

The most successful gardens, in our experience, have been situated near the cemetery entrance and on elevated, self-promoting sites. With more visitors viewing a new garden, there will be more interest, and the inquiries and sales will follow.

### 8. CONSIDER PROFESSIONAL DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION SERVICES.

Although some of the development steps for a garden can be done in-house, there are advantages to professional design and construction. An accurate, well-designed garden plan allows the cemetery to receive competitive bids from contractors to install foundations, pavements, masonry and landscaping. The end result will usually reflect the experience of a well-chosen designer and contractor.

### 9. PRICE THE PRODUCT FOR YOUR CEMETERY, NOT YOUR COMPETITOR'S.

Cremation product prices should extend from your development costs and the beauty of the garden. This pricing varies greatly from place to place. Setting grave prices by simply matching your neighbor's pricing never worked well with traditional burial space, and is a poor approach for setting cremation garden pricing. In areas where cremation has been strong for years, the quality of the gardens and pricing of their products is generally greater.

### 10. EDUCATE AND PROMOTE.

For as many years as cremation gardens and columbaria have been around, a large percentage of the public isn't familiar with them. Illustrations on how a garden will look and what products are offered help close the learning gap. The more that the public understands, the greater the comfort level and willingness to buy in. •