

Personalising a Grave Space



Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Personalising a grave space

The grave of a loved one is a special place where many of us find comfort in tending and tidying, as an act of care and respect. Many families also choose to place personal items upon a family grave to reflect the personality and character of their loved one.

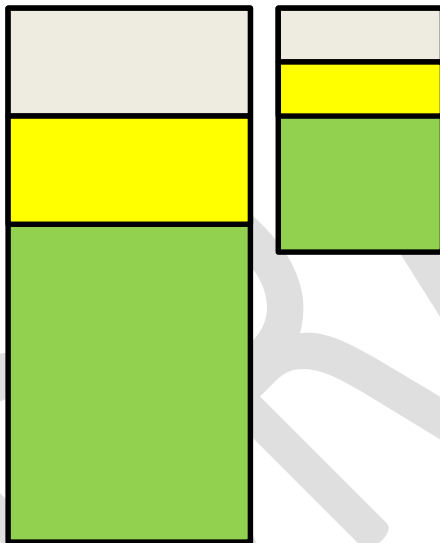
We appreciate the benefits of personalising a grave space, but we must also consider the feelings of families who have chosen not to personalise a grave or have placed just a small number of items. We also need to ensure that cemetery staff are able to carry out grounds maintenance, and that coffin-bearers and mourners can walk safely and easily to graveside for funerals.

What area is available for personalisation?

The actual area available is dependent upon the type of grave. For Lawn, Traditional and Muslim graves, this area is 1' 9" (53 cm) x 4' (122 cm) and for Cremated Remains Gardens and Babies' Burial Gardens, the area is 9' (23 cm) x 2' (60 cm). These dimensions are shown in the diagram below and illustrated in the photograph.

Lawn,
Traditional and
Muslim Graves

Babies' Burial &
Cremated Remains
Graves



Key



Memorial Area
Personalisation Area
Lawn Area

Following a funeral

Where a burial has recently taken place, there will usually be more floral tributes than can be placed within the personalisation area. These will only be removed by the Council when spent.

As soon as possible following the funeral, the cemeteries staff will turf or seed the whole grave space. Any floral tributes will be temporarily moved to allow turving, and replaced following the completion of the work.

After approximately 3 months following the funeral, only the personalisation area should be used for flowers. Vases and flower holders made from glass, porcelain or other fragile materials should not be used.

We understand, however, that during significant dates such as religious festivals or anniversaries, you may need to place floral tributes or wreaths outside the personalisation area.

How will I know exactly how much of the grave space can be personalised?

The cemeteries staff will mark out the personalisation area on individual graves by request. Where the whole of the grave space is grassed, the cemeteries staff can remove the turf from the agreed area ready for your personal items and any planting.

To arrange for the personalisation area to be marked out on your family grave, speak to a member of the cemeteries staff or telephone Bereavement Services

What kind of plants should I use to personalise this area?

We recommend that planting is restricted to bedding plants, alpines and flowering bulbs, to avoid plants quickly out-growing the personalisation area.

Conifers and other fast-growing shrubs should not be planted within the personalisation area, as these can not only hide a memorial, but also weaken the foundations, which may damage your own memorial and also those on neighbouring graves.

What personal items are not allowed?

Stockton Council has endeavoured to develop a policy acceptable to both the families that wish to personalise a grave space, and those who object to the placement of personal items.

A small number of personal items may be placed within the personalisation area, to allow a degree of variety for families personalising graves, and to ensure that carefully chosen items can be appreciated by other visitors.

The types of item that are not permitted are:

- Kerbs, fences, edging stones and other surrounds
- Gravel and other decorative chippings
- Glass, porcelain, brittle plastics and other fragile items
- Balloons
- Items that make a noise

In order to prevent memorials being hidden, height restrictions on the items that are placed are also in effect. Items placed on lawn and

traditional graves should be no taller than 12" (30 cm) and for cremated remains and babies' gardens, no taller than 6" (15 cm).

What if personalisation is placed outside the agreed area?

The installation of kerbs, fences, edging stones and other surrounds around the whole of the grave space can create significant difficulties in gaining access to neighbouring graves for funeral mourners, coffin bearers and other cemetery visitors. Such items can also restrict grave digging and general maintenance by our cemeteries staff.

Similarly, the placement of smaller personal items or planting outside the agreed area can lead to the same difficulties.

If such items are placed, then we will contact you if:

- The items prevent or restrict access for grave digging or funeral attendance
- The items encroach upon or affect a neighbouring grave
- We have received a complaint about the items from another grave owner

If the need to access a grave is urgent, because of a forthcoming funeral, we will ask you to remove the items as soon as possible.

If the situation is less pressing, then we may write to you and invite you to attend on-site to discuss matters with a member of our staff, and to reach agreement upon a reduction of your personalisation, to a level which does not cause a problem.

What if items or plants within the personalisation area have been identified as unsuitable?

Again, we may write to you if:

- Planting within the personalisation area poses a risk to the stability of your own family memorial or that of a memorial in a neighbouring grave
- We receive a complaint about items from another grave owner

In such circumstances we will invite you to attend on-site and discuss the situation, with a view to reaching agreement as to the removal or reduction of the items in question.

What if I am not sure if an item or plant is suitable?

If you are unsure about any item or plant, please either ask a member of the cemeteries staff, or telephone the Bereavement Services Team on 01642 527341/42.

If you have any queries, or if you would like further information about the range of leaflets we have available, please contact:

Bereavement Services
The Register Office
Nightingale House
Balaclava Street
Stockton-on-Tees
TS18 2AL

Telephone: 01642 527341/42

Email: bereavement.services@stockton.gov.uk

www.stockton.gov.uk/bereavementservices