

Catholic Cemeteries – Caretaker Notes

WINTER TIME **CEMETERY MAINTENANCE**

December

Flowers

- Mulch roses by mounding soil 6 to 8 inches deep over the plants to protect the graft.
- Mulch perennial beds with 2 to 4 inches of straw, shredded leaves, or other lightweight material.
- Cut tall hybrid tea roses back to 18 to 24 inches to reduce wind whipping and plant damage.
- Continue to plant spring flowering bulbs until the ground is frozen. Water and mulch.
- Empty decorative pots and containers. Store inside or decorate for winter.

Lawns

- Pick up fallen leaves, limbs, and other debris from lawn to prevent suffocation of the turf during winter.
- Store any left over lawn fertilizers in dry location and out of reach of children and pets.
- Store pesticides in a cool (not freezing) dry location for winter, out of reach of children and pets.

Trees and Shrubs

- Keep heavy snowfall from limbs of trees and shrubs by lightly shaking to avoid damage.
- To prevent breakage, avoid shoveling snow onto trees and shrubs.
- Check and protect the trunks of young trees and branches of shrubs for rabbit damage.
- Prune damaged branches throughout the winter months.
- Water newly planted trees and shrubs in winter to prevent dry soil conditions.
- Mulch roots of tender shrubs such as azaleas and rhododendrons to keep vigorous during winter.
- Prune branches of junipers, pines, hollies, and other plants to use as holiday decorations.

Miscellaneous

- Start planning for next year by making notes and preparing orders.
- Turn compost pile to encourage winter breakdown.

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January

Flowers

- Peruse seed catalogs and prepare your seed order.
- Things you can start:
 - For spring flowers, get unplanted spring bulbs in the ground as soon as possible.
 - Start seeds throughout the winter, depending on growing requirements.
- Water fall planted perennials to prevent dry soil conditions.
- Watch for signs of frost heaving and cover tender roots.
- Replace mulch layers.
- Check bulbs in storage for rot and decay. Discard damaged ones.
- Curl up with a good book and learn more about gardening (Study the Planting/Decorating Rules and Regulations).

Lawns

- Avoid walking on frozen lawns. It may injure the grass.
- Rake fallen leaves that pile up on the lawn to prevent suffocation of grass.
- Scatter snow instead of piling it up on the lawn next to drives and walks.

Trees and Shrubs

- Snow and ice on limbs:
 - Gently brush heavy snow from tree and shrub limbs to reduce damage.
 - Allow ice to melt naturally from limbs. Do not use water to melt the ice or attempt to knock it off.
- Pruning:
 - Prune storm damaged limbs quickly to reduce damage and prevent tearing of the bark.
 - Avoid the temptation to prune on warm winter day. You'll prevent further damage.
- Bring twigs of flowering trees and shrubs indoors to force blossoms.
- Water fall planted trees and shrubs when soil is dry but not frozen.
- Watch out for rabbit damage to the bark of trees and shrubs.

Miscellaneous

- Keep bird feeders and water supplies filled for the feathered friends.
- Evaluate the flower beds and make notes to assist in next year's planning.
- Take photos of the flower bed and analyze for year-round interest.

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February

Flowers

- Start seeds for transplanting in the spring.
- Check fall planted perennials and water if needed.
- Watch for frost heaving of tender perennials and cover if needed.
- Replenish winter mulch around roses and other plants.
- Check bulbs in storage and discard if rotted.
- Prepare catalog orders.

Lawns

- To prevent lawn suffocation, rake fallen leaves.
- Review lawn service contracts and make changes.
- Examine the cemetery monument and schedule a monument cleaning with the cemetery office.
- Avoid injury to the lawn when the soil is frozen by keeping foot traffic to a minimum.

Trees and Shrubs

- Check for rabbit damage on young trees and shrubs.
- Water fall planted trees, shrubs, and evergreen if the soil is dry and not frozen.
- Apply dormant oil for control of scale and mites.
- Prune:
 - Begin spring pruning. However, do not prune spring flowering trees and shrubs until after bloom.
 - Cut twigs and branches of spring shrubs and bring them indoors to add a splash of spring color.
- Carefully remove snow from limbs with a broom.
- On warm days, prepare flower bed soil for early planting.

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Choosing Christmas and Winter Decorations

Less can be more. Bigger is not always better. Less in size is more in terms of more likely not to be disturbed by passing interment equipment through the area. Less evergreens covering of the lawn area is minimizing the covered area's likelihood for damage.

Choosing a Recycled Item may be better than a better priced item. It is cheaper elsewhere but it is also more costly to dispose of that item. Cemetery wreaths and blankets are designed to be dismembered. The bows and the backings are recycled. The evergreens without Styrofoam and wires are easily shredded for mulching purpose.

In compiling the regulations and in considering revisions, we try to strike a balance between the natural desire of family members to decorate individual gravesites and the overriding obligation to maintain the appearance of the cemetery with the resources at our disposal.

The unrestricted size and placement of wreaths and blankets present two serious problems. First a gravesite in many cases is 30 to 34 inches wide by nine feet in length. Except for the space occupied by the headstone, all the rest of the space is needed for interment use. It is neither practical nor possible for our staff to pick up and replace large (oversized) evergreen blankets and loose spruce branches often used in commercial wreath assembly.

Whenever equipment passes through an area to make an interment all these decorations must be moved. The restricted size in the published rules and regulations allows machinery access to the area and to pass with minimal and reasonable handling of most placed decorations. A second problem has become an insurmountable cost and an environmental problem. We have thousands of graves in the cemetery. Each year we spend a significant amount in cubic yard container disposal costs during the month of February (and in some of our cemeteries this costs grows a little more each year). The entire month of February is dedicated to the removal of these decorations and we are concerned with the added burden placed on our local landfills.

Our resources do place a greater burden on the first alternative and we do not want to disregard our responsibility to maintain the cemetery and our impact on the environment.

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Winter and Work Restrictions



Catholic cemeteries image the care of the Church for her people, which does not cease when death occurs. Those who have gone before us into the Communion of Saints lie in the consecrated space of the Catholic Cemetery; they are family, friends, fellow parishioners, and co-laborers, all believers in Jesus Christ, Eternal Life and the Kingdom of God. Whether summer or winter, whether in rain, snow or sunshine, those who work the grounds must keep these facilities in a condition that makes them both accessible and welcoming. Catholic cemeteries are to be places of remembrance and hope, prayer and comfort; they must be facilities that reflect the Church's theology about dignity of each human person, whether that person is alive or in the tomb awaiting the day of final judgment.

Comments and suggestions are always welcomed. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this or other matters, feel free to contact the cemetery office.

EXTERIOR WATER SYSTEM SHUT DOWN

As temperatures approach the freezing mark the cemetery's exterior water system is shut down for the winter. Water is available to lot owners and visitors at some key locations general found adjacent to the public restroom facilities.

SNOW STAKES

Since winter snow is sometimes heavy in our area, we place wooden stakes along the road edge to guide snowplows. The stakes are placed approximately every 100 feet and are removed during spring.

SNOW FENCING AROUND LAKE AREAS

Since winter ice is sometimes heavy in our area, we place a temporary fence along the lake edge to warn and prevent access to the cemetery lakes. Ice-skating can be dangerous and is considered inappropriate on cemetery grounds.

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FOUNDATION AND FOUNDATION CAP WORK

The cemetery suspends all foundation installation and foundation cap work until spring. With a three to four month back order on foundation work and many families desire to erect a monument before the spring holiday and holy days the cemetery will experience a delay with this requested work. Sometimes the monuments are actually ready before the foundation work is completed. The faster the monument permit is filed and approved at the cemetery office by the monument dealer, the faster this work can be added to our list of foundation work to be completed. Upon completion of the work we notify the monument dealer that the monument may be set.

CRYPT AND MONUMENT SANDBLAST INSCRIPTION WORK

The cemetery suspends all crypt and monument sandblast inscription work from mid-November to the end of March. The faster the inscription approval form is returned and given approval at the cemetery office, the faster this work can be added to our list of crypt inscription work to be completed. With a three to four month delay in inscription work it may take several weeks into April (weather permitting) to complete all the back ordered work.

Consistent Climatic Conditions is the key to performing our work well and correctly. To rake the soil of the grounds, to pour cement for foundations or to cut a crypt cover that will not crack or chip the weather needs to be milder for duration of 1 to 2 weeks with mild night temperatures as well.

Patience and cooperation is requested from all. We sincerely trust that most visitors will understand the necessity of these decisions with regard to winter cemetery operations.

Settlement & Gravesite with Sinkage

From late October to early March the cemetery staff will place clean dirt fill on gravesites that settle or sink due as a result of recent burial and inclement weather. When the ground is frozen, the gravesite's appearance can be uneven and in need of leveling however, sometimes this work has to wait to be completed effectively. From mid-March through May these areas can be top-soiled and seeded.

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Change in Date --- Reminder

15th of January 2012 – Weather permitting, the cemetery shall commence the removal of all Christmas and Winter Decorations. **Removal of Christmas and Winter Decorations** may take the entire month of mid-January to mid-February to complete. Visitors wishing to remove these items sooner can place the Christmas and Winter decorations in or near the trash receptacles in each section to be picked up by our maintenance staff. One week after Easter the cemetery removes artificial flowers and decorations.

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