

Choosing an Urn - Lastingpost.com

Introduction

If you want a specific type of urn this should be chosen before the funeral and brought to the crematorium so the ashes (sometimes called cremains) can be placed in it after the cremation has taken place. The prepared ashes consist totally of bone ash and usually weigh between 4 and 6 lbs.

Types of urn

There is a wide range of urns available. The container is usually made from wood (oak, cherry wood or mahogany), metal (brass, copper, bronze and pewter) or stone (often granite or marble). The size of an urn is about 200 cubic inches in capacity.

Specific types of urn include keepsake urns which are small urns capable of holding a proportion of the ashes. These can be used so various members of the family can hold some of the ashes. They are also useful if several people wish to participate in a family gathering to scatter the ashes.

Biodegradable urns are growing in popularity. These are useful if someone wants their ashes scattered at sea. A level of dignity is retained on days when a sea breeze is blowing.

A special silk travel urn should be used if a family are proposing a final resting place that involves air travel to avoid problems with airport security.

Finally, there are companion urns which comprise of two compartments or one large one for partners who want to be together for eternity.

Final resting place for the ashes

After the cremation, a final resting place for the ashes must be sought. In the absence of instructions from the person who has died, most crematoria will store the ashes for free for a period of time (sometimes up to a month or two) to give the family time to reach a final decision.

The options in choosing a final resting place are as follows:

Placed in a memorial garden

In about 80% of cases, the ashes are strewn or buried in crematoria gardens of remembrance. The disadvantage is that very often individual memorials marking burial spots are not permitted. A book of remembrance will however usually be available. Many crematoria do provide an urn wall (also called a Columbarium) where an urn and ashes can be securely sealed above ground with an accompanying memorial plaque.

Burial of the urn

As an alternative, an increasing number of cemeteries offer small plots where an urn and the ashes can be buried or interred with a plaque or memorial placed in remembrance. In addition, numbers of people request that the urn containing their ashes is buried in a family grave. The advantage of these more formal types of burial is that they provide permanent resting places where family can focus their grief and which eventually become permanent memorials celebrating people's lives.

Scattering the ashes

Increasingly, people are requesting that their ashes be scattered in a place on land or at sea of personal significance. There is no restriction on this although on private land, the permission of the property owner should be obtained.

Retained by the family

Some families take solace in keeping the urn containing the ashes with them at home on a favourite mantelpiece or shelf.

Alternative suggestions

A company in Wales called Here in Spirit makes urns that incorporate the deceased's ashes in the glaze.

Alternatively, the deceased's ashes can be used to create glassware and jewellery. There is a company in Essex called Ashes into Glass that provides that makes ashes into glass. A company called LifeGem creates synthetic diamonds from the carbon found in ash.

As a further alternative, a US company called Huggable Urns has designed a range of soft cuddly teddy bears with a zippered compartment that contains a velvet pouch for storing the ashes.

Useful Links

Here in Spirit
www.hereinspirit.com

Ashes into Glass
www.ashesintoglass.co.uk

LifeGem UK
www.lifegems.com

Huggable Urns
www.huggableurns.com

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Last updated: 14th July, 2009

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