

History: The Masonic Cemetery is a rural cemetery, not a lawn cemetery. The rural cemetery movement emerged from the Transcendental movement, which linked nature with the divine. Cemeteries were places where the beauty of unspoiled nature became a part of the memorial for the dead. When the Masonic Cemetery was established in 1859, it was three miles from Eugene. While now surrounded by the cityscape, we strive to preserve the cemetery as a living memory of the early-settlement natural environment. The tall, native grasses are an essential piece of this.

Native Vegetation: We don't mow because we are committed to preserving and encouraging over 100 varieties of native plants found in the cemetery. We actively propagate our colonies of wildflowers. Mowing inhibits the plants' life cycles, i.e., their ability to finish blooming and produce seeds.

Ecology: Local naturalists and ecologists endorse our mowing plan because the preservation of native species is critical to the maintenance of biodiversity which is essential for the health of our planet. Less mowing means using less fossil fuel, emitting less exhaust, and generating less noise. Native plants require less watering than do exotic species, and small mammals, birds and butterflies rely on the habitat provided by tall grasses.

Education: Every year dozens of school groups take field trips to the cemetery to study the native vegetation. From pre-schoolers with butterfly nets to LCC botany and UO landscape classes, we provide a very accessible site where our area's natural history can be experienced.

Masonic Cemetery landscaping policies are a very small example of a local, national, and world-wide recognition of the need to actively preserve our open spaces and natural environment. In the 19th century, people had a deep appreciation of the beauty of nature and had done relatively little to destroy it. In the early 21st century, our appreciation of nature has been rekindled. The renewed interest brings with it the added responsibility of caring for what natural settings remain.