



# Cemetery Preservation

Cemeteries are valuable and fragile resources. They teach researchers and visitors about people, traditions, and cultural landscapes. Older cemeteries can show damage from environmental forces, neglect, vandalism, and commercial development. Help ensure these places are recorded, preserved, and remembered.

## Record to preserve knowledge

- Complete an **NC site file**. Visit [archaeology.ncdcr.gov/programs/cemeteries](http://archaeology.ncdcr.gov/programs/cemeteries) to contact the state cemetery specialist, check the site's recording status, and access an easy form to document location, features, and history. A site file helps protect the cemetery and preserves information about it for future generations.
- **Photograph** markers, epitaphs, artifacts, fences, and larger cemetery landscape views from multiple angles.
- Sketch a **map** of the cemetery's layout. Show features including grave depressions, headstones and footstones, arrangement in lines or clusters, proximity to trees and fences.



## Take care to preserve fragile resources

- **Tap water and a soft brush** will clean most stones. Antimicrobial agents like D/2 Biological Solution are useful and long lasting. **DO NOT** use damaging bleach, household cleaners, power washers, or abrasives
- Most **repair work** requires training and is best undertaken by a professional. The cemetery specialist can help identify appropriate resources.
- Pay attention to the **landscape**. Do not pull plants by their roots or use mechanical equipment to remove tree trunks. Such disruption may disturb underlying burials or damage stones. State law (N.C.G.S. § 14-148 and § 14-149) also protects plants that are acting as memorials or living grave markers. Remember that there are ways to mark a grave other than headstones, so beware of moving any large stones or configurations of natural items, like logs.



## Plan to preserve for the long term

- Work with the **cemetery owner** or responsible organization before starting a preservation plan.
- Use a critical eye to look for **safety hazards**, dangerous trees, and access issues.
- Visit [bit.ly/2OZTZTR](https://bit.ly/2OZTZTR) for a sample **assessment** worksheet. Use the assessment to prioritize expenditures, set standards for historic character, outline roles for landowners' or friends' groups, determine an interpretation plan, and strategize fundraising.



## Contact authorities if necessary

- Human/coffin remains and/or evidence of **human burial**: county sheriff's office
- Evidence of grave-digging or **cemetery damage**: local law enforcement agency
- Local/state **regulations**: local government attorney's office or the N.C. Office of State Archaeology's Historic Cemetery Specialist, [archaeology.ncdcr.gov/programs/cemeteries](http://archaeology.ncdcr.gov/programs/cemeteries)