



CEMETERY DECORATIONS POLICY

Catholic Cemeteries of Columbus (CCOC)

A Sacred Tradition

From the earliest times in the Church's tradition, families have honored their loved ones by decorating places of interment with symbols of faith and hope in the Resurrection. Our cemeteries are sacred places, and we are committed to maintaining them in a manner that is respectful to all who have entrusted their loved ones to our care.

To preserve the beauty, dignity, and safe operation of our cemeteries, it is necessary to limit the type and placement of decorations.

For purposes of this policy, **any item other than an approved marker, monument, bench, or personal columbarium is considered a decoration.**

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Due to the nature of cemetery operations, **CCOC is not responsible for damage to or loss of decorations, regardless of cause.**

B. Funeral Flowers at the Time of Interment

Immediately following an interment, it is customary for funeral flowers to be placed at the grave or, in the case of entombment, near the crypt or niche.

- **Live funeral flowers are permitted immediately following the service.**
 - Funeral flowers must be placed:
 - directly on the grave, or
 - on the floor/ground near the crypt or niche in the case of a mausoleum interment.
 - Funeral flowers will be removed and discarded **48 hours after the interment.**
 - No glass vases are permitted
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C. Decorations Generally Permitted

CCOC permits limited decorations at places of interment. In general, the following items are allowed:

1. **Planted flowers** (monument lots only) Family responsible for upkeep.
 - Must be planted **within 12 inches directly in front of the monument**
 - Must use **shredded hardwood mulch**
2. **Potted plants** (marker or monument graves only)
 - May be placed no sooner than **three (3) days before** the following holidays:
 - Easter
 - Mother's Day
 - Father's Day
 - Memorial Day
 - All Souls' Day
 - Will be removed **the week following the weekend after the holiday** (or if the holiday falls on a weekend, removal occurs the second week following)

3. **Fresh cut flowers or artificial flowers**
 - Must be placed in a **cemetery-approved vase**
 4. **American flags**
 - Must be no taller than **2 feet**
 - Must be planted in the ground near the grave marker or monument, or in an approved flag stand
 - A miniature flag may be placed in an approved vase on a crypt or niche front
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D. Upright Monument Lot Decorations

1. Flower Bed Guidelines

Flowers may only be planted **in front of an upright monument** and must meet the following requirements:

- Plantings may only extend:
 - along the front of the monument base
 - outward **no more than 12 inches**
- No plantings are permitted along the sides or rear of the monument.
- CCOC is not responsible for flowers planted beyond the permitted 12-inch area.
- **No flower beds are permitted on graves with 8-inch beveled or flush markers.**

2. Approved Flower Types

- Annuals and perennials are permitted **only if they do not spread beyond the approved area**
- Flowers may not exceed **three (3) feet in height**
- Spreading vines (such as ivy) are not permitted
- CCOC reserves the right to determine whether any plant is acceptable
(Families are encouraged to contact the cemetery office before planting.)

3. Mulch Requirement

Only **shredded hardwood mulch** is permitted in flower beds.

4. Shrubs and Bushes

- No new shrubs, bushes, or non-flower landscaping may be planted.
 - Existing shrubs or bushes are “grandfathered” and permitted **only if properly maintained.**
 - Any neglected plantings may be removed at the discretion of CCOC without notice.
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E. Crypt and Niche Decorations

Crypt and niche fronts are part of the mausoleum structure owned by the Diocese. To protect the integrity and appearance of these sacred spaces:

1. Permitted Items

Only **CCOC-approved and CCOC-installed** items are permitted, including:

- name plates
- vases
- porcelain photographs

2. Prohibited Items

The following are not permitted on crypt or niche fronts:

- stickers
- Command hooks
- wreaths (except as allowed in the Christmas section below)
- any decoration affixed with adhesive
- any decoration hung or attached in any way

3. Flowers

- Live and artificial flowers are permitted **only in approved installed vases**
- No live flowers are permitted in vase units inside enclosed mausoleum buildings (such as chapel mausoleums)

4. Protection of Granite and Marble

Crypt and niche fronts are often made of porous materials such as granite or marble. Adhesives can cause staining, discoloration, or permanent damage.

Unauthorized items will be removed, and **any repair costs will be assessed to the owner of the Right of Interment or surviving heirs.**

5. Glass-Front Niches

- Only approved non-perishable items may be placed inside the niche
 - Nothing may be placed on the inside or outside glass surface
 - Any items placed on the glass will be removed immediately
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F. Vase Flower Decorations

Vases for live or artificial flowers are permitted on graves, niches, and crypts.

1. Approval and Installation

- All vases must be submitted to the cemetery for approval before installation.
- Installation will be completed by a CCOC employee to ensure compliance.

2. Vase Locations

- Monument graves:
 - on the base of the monument, incorporated into the design, or
 - in an in-ground granite holder placed no more than 12 inches in front of the monument
- Flush or beveled markers:
 - incorporated into the marker design, or
 - in an in-ground granite holder placed no more than 12 inches in front of the marker
- Personal columbarium lots:
 - vases may be incorporated into the columbarium design
 - no in-ground vase holders unless approved by management
- Granite-faced niches or crypts:
 - vases must be purchased from CCOC and properly affixed
 - no other vases are permitted
- Glass-faced niches:
 - no vases are permitted

- Memorial benches:
 - only granite vases are permitted

3. Vase Contents

Only live or artificial flowers are permitted in approved vases.

- Live cut flowers are permitted year-round
- Artificial flowers are permitted only during winter months: **November 1 through March 1** unless located inside chapels

G. Prohibited Decorations

Certain decorations are prohibited because they may cause injury, interfere with grounds maintenance, damage equipment, or detract from the sacred atmosphere of the cemetery.

The following items are not permitted:

- alcoholic products
- balloons, pinwheels, wind chimes
- lights, candles, statues, stuffed animals, and similar items
- glass or plastic decorations (including vigil lights and glass vases)
- homemade memorials or temporary markers
- rocks, coins, or other small objects that may become projectiles
- offensive items or items inconsistent with the Catholic cemetery setting
- permanent in-ground plantings
- any object attached to headstones, markers, or niche covers
- any object placed on the base or top of a marker or monument
- paint or permanent markings on memorials
- marble chips, stones, wood chips, bricks, or border landscaping materials
- metal containers
- fresh flowers on interior crypts or niches
- hooks or hangers designed to hold baskets or planters

Unauthorized items may be removed without notice.

H. Christmas Wreaths (Seasonal Exception)

The only exception to the decoration rules is the placement of a **Christmas wreath** during the Christmas season. Can be placed on graves or crypt/niche fronts during **December and January**

CCOC is not responsible for any removed holiday decorations and does not store removed items for retrieval.

I. Memorial Trees

CCOC offers families the opportunity to participate in our beautification program by donating toward a memorial tree.

- Families may select a tree for memorialization
 - Memorial trees include a metal plaque placed at the base of the tree
 - The tree remains the property of CCOC
 - No additional decorations or plantings are permitted around memorial trees
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J. Temporary Moving of Decorations

Cemetery staff may occasionally need to move decorations to allow for an interment or maintenance work. Staff will make a reasonable effort to return decorations to the correct location; however, this can be difficult if items are not clearly identified.

Families are encouraged to mark decorations with:

- deceased surname
 - section
 - lot number
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K. Weekly Cleanup and Enforcement

To ensure consistent and fair enforcement, CCOC inspects cemetery grounds on a weekly basis. Any decorations not permitted under this policy may be removed. Unused vases will be turned down in the marker during the mowing season.
