

Title	Flower and Ornament Policy		
Document Sponsor	Chief Customer Officer		
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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust (GMCT) recognises that visitors bring and place items on graves or memorials, and that such items represent a connection to the deceased. The items placed by visitors often hold particular sentimental, cultural and/or religious significance.

However, such items are susceptible to theft or damage by birds, wildlife and the elements, and their placement in operational and high-traffic areas may pose a risk to the health and safety of GMCT staff and visitors. The policy provides a basis for the judicious control and/or removal of these items.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to the placement of any item (including plants) on or adjacent to a grave or memorial, or within a mausoleum, on GMCT grounds. It does not apply to:

- Plaques (provided by GMCT or a stonemason or an approved GMCT plaque provider)
- Stonemasonry with the required memorialisation permit
- Cameos
- Vases and ornaments that form part of the authorised monument or memorial (as detailed in the application for the memorial permit) and affixed to the memorial by a stonemason

2 Policy Statement

GMCT is not liable for the care or maintenance of items placed on a grave or memorial, and does not accept responsibility for theft, loss or damage to items.

GMCT staff are authorised to remove any item from a grave, memorial or mausoleum:

- a) for the reasons and in the circumstances outlined in this policy; and
- b) at the request of the holder of the Right of Interment, where an item has been placed on a location without their consent.

Policy Details

In general, the number of items may not exceed three small pieces per memorial, and all must be fully contained within the area of the approved memorial space. Items must not be placed on lawn areas, as they impede the ability of GMCT staff to undertake regular maintenance, and must not be attached to any park features including but not limited to:

- Trees
- Shrubs
- Roses
- Fencing
- Seats
- Posts
- Pathways
- Signage
- Adjacent graves

GMCT reserves the right to establish alternative flower and ornamentation guidelines where specific circumstances warrant them, such as the development of a new greenfield cemetery.

2.1 Publication of Guidelines

GMCT will produce and maintain a customer-facing brochure outlining the principles of this policy and providing specific guidelines relating to the placement of flowers and decorations (items). This brochure is accessible via the GMCT web site and is provided to all customers at the time of purchase.

2.2 Flowers

Fresh cut and artificial flowers are permitted at all outdoor memorial locations.

Fresh cut flowers are not permitted inside GMCT Mausolea Chapels or Annexures at any time, as moisture may damage the stone.

GMCT will remove and dispose of any fresh flowers found inside the mausolea, without notice.

GMCT staff will remove and dispose of wired flower arrangements, wilted flowers and flowers that have been blown from their vases (or moved by birds), as part of scheduled maintenance activities throughout the cemetery.

GMCT provides plastic stake vases at areas of high visitation (or available for collection from the reception areas of Lilydale Memorial Park, Altona Memorial Park and Fawkner Memorial Park). Personal vases are permitted provided they are non-breakable, not listed as a restricted item, and on the condition that the care, maintenance and security of such vases is the sole responsibility of the person placing the item.

2.3 Restricted Items

GMCT staff are authorised to remove any items that may pose a risk to the health and safety, or cause nuisance to visitors and staff, including but not limited to:

Glass containers (bottles, jars etc.) or ceramic items	Tins or aluminium cans	Fragile or breakable items
Non-standard edging, curbing, stones and bark	Decorative pickets, fencing or border decorations	Metal ground spikes used to hang decorations
Seating, benches	Items with fillers that attract vermin	Small items that could be ingested by a child
Non-approved memorial structures	Alcohol	Items with sharp edges
Devices that emit persistent music, voice recordings or sounds		

Where restricted items are present, they will be removed in accordance with this policy. Prior to removal, GMCT will assess the level of risk and implement an appropriate removal plan, incorporating communications and storage for collection where appropriate.

2.4 Removal of Items

Items that pose a high risk, are excessive or restrict operational activities will be removed immediately in accordance with this policy and the Flower and Ornament Management Procedure.

In instances where the risk is not deemed high, but removal of items is required, GMCT will display signage in that area for no less than 4 weeks prior to the removal work commencing, to allow families to collect their items before removal by GMCT.

Wherever possible, items removed will be held in onsite storage for a period of six weeks following removal, and available during that time, for collection by prior arrangement (in alignment with the Flower and Ornament Management Procedure). Items remaining unclaimed will be disposed of in a manner determined by GMCT. In instances where there are isolated locations requiring rectification, GMCT will attempt to contact the holder of the Right of Interment (ROI), as captured in GMCT records, to advise of the need for items to be removed. In the event contact cannot be made, or items are not removed within agreed timeframes, GMCT will arrange removal.

2.5 Ceremonial Use of Fire

Candles, lanterns and other types of ceremonial naked flame are not permitted in GMCT mausolea. Candles and ceremonial fire (naked flame) of any kind in the GMCT cemetery grounds, must not be left alight and unattended. If found unattended for any period of time, GMCT staff are required to extinguish the naked flame. This includes any ceremonial fire, candles or oil burners, including those contained within memorial candle boxes.

GMCT will, on specific or general advice from the Fire Rescue Victoria, Country Fire Authority, State Emergency Service, or other authorised body, restrict or prohibit the use of candles and all types of ceremonial fire on GMCT grounds for a period of time, as deemed necessary.

Ceremonial use of fire (naked flame) is prohibited on all declared Total Fire Ban days.

GMCT respect the cultural tradition of smoking ceremonies to cleanse and protect. Customers and Funeral Directors are encouraged to contact GMCT to request provision of a suitable environment to perform such ceremonies.

2.6 Children's Memorials

In recognition of the particular sensitivity attached to children's memorials, GMCT will exercise this policy in such areas at their sole discretion with care and empathy and will only remove items where entirely necessary to ensure the health and safety of visitors and staff or maintain harmony of the area for all visitors. Wherever practicable, GMCT will endeavour to consult and support families when dealing with the removal of prohibited items.

Visitors should be mindful of children visiting the area. Items must be safe for children (not ingestible, no sharp edges or breakable).

2.7 Plantings

GMCT retains the responsibility for managing all plantings on cemetery grounds and personal plantings are not permitted on graves or memorials. Plants contained in small pots that are placed within the area nominated for ornamentation, that do not restrict access of operations staff, are permitted.

Unapproved plantings will be assessed by GMCT staff and removal conducted where necessary to ensure the integrity of the site's existing flora and fauna.

Unauthorised planting within a memorial area, where required to be removed to conform to this policy, must be removed by the Right of Interment holder or their nominated representative, at their own expense.

2.8 Temporary Markers

Temporary Markers, where permitted, can be placed for a period of up to twelve months from the date of the interment. After twelve months, GMCT staff will remove these items in accordance with this policy and dispose of any unclaimed markers.

2.9 Mausolea Items

The use of adhesives to affix unauthorised items to mausoleum stone is prohibited as it can damage the stone. Any costs associated with the removal / repair of stone damaged in this manner, will be borne by the holder of the Right of Interment.

Items must also not be placed on the mausoleum floor, as this poses a safety risk for visitors and staff and obstructs regular cleaning and maintenance.

Any item inserted into electricity sockets within the mausolea will be removed by GMCT (lights, diffusers etc.)

3 References and Related Materials

3.1 Legislation and Regulations

Cemeteries & Crematoria Act 2003 (Vic.)

Cemeteries & Crematoria Regulations 2025 (Vic.)

3.2 Related GMCT Documents

Decorating your loved one's memorial guide

Children's memorial decoration guide

Flower and Ornament Management Procedure

4 Policy History

Date	Details of Change
16/08/2016	Reformatted into new template. Abridged with no loss of fidelity. Definitions of key terms added. Commitment to publish customer guidelines formalised.
01/08/2022	Updated policy with minor updates namely: • Update the sponsor details. • 3.1 Publication of guidelines – added detail of customer facing document provision • Addition to 3.3 restricted items • Clarification 3.7 Plantings – unauthorised planting to be removed by ROI at their expense • Addition of 3.9 Mausolea items
04/03/2026	• Updates to provide greater clarity of what is and is not acceptable and further detail of the removal process. • Re-formatted into new WORD document. • Incorporated reference to Greenfield locations.

5 Definitions

Term	Definition
Ceremonial fire	Includes candles, oil burners, lanterns, incense, joss sticks and other similar items associated with ceremonies with a naked flame.
Temporary marker	Refers to the variety of marker generally supplied by the funeral director to mark the location of a grave until monumental works are completed.
Items	Personally supplied ornaments, plants, flowers, trinkets and memorabilia. Including but not limited to, vases, pictures, figurines, pots, personal effects etc.
Small items	Toys, trinkets, memorabilia, figurines, personal effects.
Unauthorised	Without GMCT's approval or permission in writing (email / letter / signage / permit).
Personal planting	Any flora / plant / shrub / tree brought into the cemetery by a visitor – not provided by GMCT.
Right of Interment holder	Person officially recorded by a cemetery trust as having the exclusive legal authority to manage a specific burial plot, crypt, or cremation niche. They make decisions regarding who is buried there, approve memorial installations, and manage renewals, usually for perpetuity or a fixed term.