

## **Biodegradable and environmentally conscious coffins**

The coffin is probably the most symbolic item of the funeral proceeding and some families may not be aware of the choices of coffins that are currently available.

Traditional 'shaped' coffins, made of hard oak or elm wood have been used for years. But there are now many more environmentally-friendly options to consider.

### **Environmental issues**

Veneered coffins, when used for cremation, give off pollutants into the atmosphere and it is understood that formaldehyde is used when making the chipboard, which is also harmful to the environment. In recent years other coffin options have been developed and there is now a choice of environmentally friendly coffins available to both the public and funeral directors, which meet the beliefs and needs of the bereaved.

### **Cardboard coffins**

Cardboard coffins are increasing in popularity. They are biodegradable and can be made from recycled materials. They are also easily personalised and very affordable. These coffins can be used for burial and cremation and they offer lower pollution rates when used for cremation, making them an environmentally friendly option.

### **Bamboo coffins**

Bamboo grows faster than any other plant on the planet, so coffins woven from bamboo are more sustainable. They are also a generally low maintenance plant and can be grown in a range of climate conditions. However, they are slightly more expensive than cardboard coffins because they have a much more elegant aesthetic. Not only does the growth process of the bamboo plant complete itself in a few months, but also bamboo plants can regenerate from their own root systems.

Most bamboo coffins are made of fine strips of bamboo that are interlaced to create a natural look, and will come with a cotton interior that makes it suitable for viewings or a service before the burial or cremation. This makes bamboo coffins a great choice if you are considering natural coffins but still want the casket to have a graceful appearance.

### **Willow coffins**

Willow is an environmentally renewable resource. The willow plant grows up to 8ft in height and can be harvested annually from the same crown for up to 60 years. Willow is by far the ultimate in environmental recycling, growing in rows of bushes and – once harvested – can generate back to the same height within a year.



Willow coffins are handcrafted from the sustainable willow using traditional methods. The willow is woven onto a self-supporting frame, which gives the coffins exceptional strength whilst at the same time remaining incredibly light.

## **Wool coffins**

Suitable for both burial and cremation, the non-traditional coffin shape and woollen feel can offer a softer alternative to the usual hardwood coffin. They are usually hand constructed using 100% wool.

The woollen outer layer is fitted around a strong 100% recycled cardboard frame, which is reinforced with an MDF base board for rigidity and stability to ensure suitability for use in cremations.

## **Coffin requirements**

Coffins should not be oversized, because this would cause problems for the burial or cremation authority. An accurately sized coffin will also be easier to handle and manoeuvre. The coffin must be suitably made and constructed to ensure that it will bear the weight of your loved one.

The coffin must not be varnished but the use of water-based paint can be used to decorate the coffin if desired.

The use of plastic, zinc and pitch must be avoided in the lining and construction of the coffin. Cotton sheets should be used to line the coffin.

Your loved one should be dressed in their own clothes, which must be made of cotton polyester or linen. Leather or rubber-soled shoes, jackets or wool clothing and any type of plastic must not be used.

No inflammable items should be placed within the coffin, which could cause an explosion during the cremation cycle. This includes aerosol cans, batteries, bottles and coconuts, which, upon cremation, can cause severe damage to the cremator brickwork.

The list below is not exhaustive but is designed to offer suggestions if you would like to explore biodegradable and “eco” coffins:

### **ECoffins**

Garland House  
Rawling Street  
Milstead  
Sittingbourne  
Kent ME9 0RT  
01795 830688  
Website: [www.ecoffins.co.uk](http://www.ecoffins.co.uk)



# Wealden Crematorium

**Natural Endings** (suppliers of eco-friendly coffins)

151 Northenden Road  
Sale, Manchester M33 2HS  
Telephone: 0161 969 6690  
Website: [www.naturalendings.co.uk/eco-coffins/](http://www.naturalendings.co.uk/eco-coffins/)

**Parley Green** (suppliers of cardboard coffins)

1 Nimrod Way  
Ferndown Industrial Estate  
Dorset BH21 7SH  
Telephone: 01202 051371  
Website: [www.parleygreen.co.uk/](http://www.parleygreen.co.uk/)

**Sussex Willow Coffins** (supplier of eco-friendly wicker willow coffins nationwide)

Brighton, Hove and Steyning  
West Sussex BN44 3RH  
Telephone: 01273 671430  
Website: [www.sussexwillowcoffins.co.uk](http://www.sussexwillowcoffins.co.uk)