

HOW TO SAFELY CLEAN YOUR FAMILY'S GRAVE MARKERS

Before you begin, be sure you have permission to do so. Markers are the property of the individual family, not the cemetery. Just because you knew the person, it doesn't mean they want you working on their stone.

There are many sites that tell you what to use and how to scrub a stone. Be careful. Be sure the person knows what they are doing. They may be giving well-meaning advice, but that advice can potentially damage the stone later on.

SAFETY FIRST! Please be extra cautious when working with tall or older stones. We've worked on stones that have looked solid but as work has begun, they have become very unsteady. Test it out first. If it wobbles, let the cemetery know. They may have materials to stabilize it.

SUPPLY LIST

- Wet & Forget (Outdoor only) or D2. Both of these are approved by a number of organizations and are environmentally better for the landscaping and lawns. Some may tell you dish detergent or bleach are just as good. The immediate results may look great but may actually make small pits in the stone which will enlarge over time, may start melting the stone, or cloud the stone's finish
- Two spray bottles (one for the solution, the other for water to use for rinsing). If you really plan on spraying a lot, you might want to use a garden sprayer
- SOFT bristle brushes such as toothbrushes. We get them at the dollar store. They're cheap, soft, and come in a variety of sizes. We recommend the handheld and circular. They work great on the lettering.
- Cheap, flexible ice scrapers. The cheap ones have a bend to them. Don't use the ones that are in your car. They will scratch the surface or chip the stone. Dollar Store is good at times.
- Face mask, gloves, safety glasses (old sunglasses) - These are especially useful when cleaning stones covered in moss/lichen.
- Bug spray, sunscreen, water bottle, hat
- Patience, patience, and more patience

DIRECTIONS

1. Assess the stone. If it's wobbly, or is a flat that has sunken, let the office know. They will raise it, gratis. But give them time. They have other work that must be done first. Take a look at the stone to see if it has cracks, stains, lichen or moss growing on it. Give it a good brush and/or scraping to remove anything that's loose.
2. Soak a section of the stone with the solution. If you want, you can soak the whole thing and walk away. Believe it or not, it will take care of itself. It may take weeks or months but take a picture. Remember to have patience.
3. Let the solution set for 5-10 minutes. Using your brushes, start scrubbing. Using a circular motion is better at getting lichen out. Use the toothbrush to get in the crevices of the lettering.
4. Rinse off with clean water.
5. Most stones will need a second coat. Don't be afraid if you see the solution turn color (dark yellow). That's a good sign. Once again, your stone still may not look as you hoped it would, but give it time.
6. The cleaning should only be done once (or maybe twice) a year.
7. Again, have patience