

Bluestem



Yellow and red leaves swirl together as they make their journey to the hard earth, landing on meadow, or still pond waters. To rest, to float, to peacefully decompose into soil. New life will make its home in these earthen piles, fireflies will gently tuck their eggs in these protected havens. The loud cicada songs of summer have ceased, and the squirrels are gathering nuts for the winter months. It is a most year, and the acorns are abundant. We watch a carpet of acorns collect under the Oak trees inviting the animals to feast and eat well through the cold months. The rhythm of Autumn calls us to slow, reflect, settle into ourselves. As some of us prepare for fall holiday rituals, let us remember our loved ones who have passed. Let us hold their memory close as we walk the land, feeling the season changing, seeing the bright colors fading, the insects' hum soft and low.



October Reflections on Bluestem's Pond

We come together as volunteers to love this land and this place. To help create the dream of Bluestem with our loving fingers planting seeds in soil, digging graves for beloveds, arms holding onto one another in our grief. Birds call, the cows in the neighboring fields moo. Tears are shed on the earth and laughter reverberates through the trees. Someone asks, "is this really a cemetery?" The answer is yes -- a place of reverence for the past and the future, where we honor precious life and endings with loved ones both near and gone. Welcome to Bluestem.



Friends walking in the grasslands

OPENING NOVEMBER 20

It has been a long and very full year of Building Bluestem. We are so grateful for your patience, commitment, generosity, and for those

working with us on the land, *your muscle strength!*

Sunday, November 20, Bluestem opens to the public as a place of worship and nature preserve, at 1900 Hurdle Mills Road in Cedar Grove. Neighbors, dog walkers, birders, naturalists, seekers, hikers and walkers, are all invited to visit and care for Bluestem, 365 days a year from dawn to dusk.

Park in the designated parking area off Hurdle Mills Road. Stop by the Information Barn and check out the map and orientation materials. Grab a trail map and head into Bluestem, where natural pathways direct you around and through grassland fields, find the two developing woodland trails by their TRAIL signs, and spend a quiet moment beside the pond or in the natural sanctuary. Stay on marked trails and do not trespass onto neighboring lands. Watch out for wildlife and take a moment to listen, look up into the sky, feel the breeze and breathe in long and deep. *Thank you for bringing Bluestem alive.*

Explore Bluestem



Burial of ashes in the grasslands

BURIAL AT BLUESTEM

Five families have laid beloveds to rest at Bluestem with intimate, personal green burial services they designed and generated. We are so grateful to the Pherribo family for assisting Bluestem in educating others about green burial. They offer their experience honoring brother Akalema in [One Family's Story](#). Visual storytelling graciously donated by Bluestem volunteer [Kallyn Boerner](#).

Working with home funeral guides and willing funeral homes is

important to Bluestem and necessary for families. We continue to connect with death caregivers and workers desiring to assist families in organizing their affairs, preparing for end of life, planning for green burial, and designing personal graveside services. Find our list of [service providers](#) online. [Contact us](#) if you have services to offer.

Bluestem is open for immediate need burial. Contact [Jeff](#) or [Heidi](#) to make arrangements.



Woodland gravesite at Bluestem

PREPLANNING FOR BURIAL

In late September, we opened the first round of burial plot reservations to Bluestem donors and volunteers. They began their planning process by filling out a burial preference form ([find here](#)). We are now scheduling appointments with these individuals to make burial plot selections and finalize their commitments. Following this round we will invite individuals who have completed burial preference forms prior to October 31.

For newcomers to Bluestem: if you are just learning about green burial or thinking about planning for one, we encourage you to read through the [green burial section](#) on our website, check out our [resources](#) page, and consider some of the [important decisions](#) you will need to make ahead of time. If you wish to pursue burial options with us please complete a [burial preference form](#) online. This document holds your place on Bluestem's reservation list. You can also bring your questions to our [Bluestem Conversations](#) every Tuesday or sign up for a [Walking Tour](#).

Individuals who have completed burial preference forms after October 31, will be invited to schedule burial plot selection and commitments in January 2023.



An American Goldfinch alights in the grasslands - Photo by Noah Rokoske

CONSERVATION BURIAL

What does conservation have to do with a cemetery? Great question, and one we love to answer! Modern burial practices in conventional cemeteries use metals and concrete, as well as toxic chemicals that are damaging to the environment. They demand expensive, often limited, resources. Cemeteries in cities throughout the country are running out of space. By reimagining a final resting place in a landscape undergoing restoration, conservation burial supports native habitat while reclaiming age-old practices of “green” burial, inviting family and friends into active participation in the sacred act of saying farewell. At Bluestem, green burial occurs alongside our conservation practices and takes green burial one step further in the permanent protection of the land with a conservation easement.

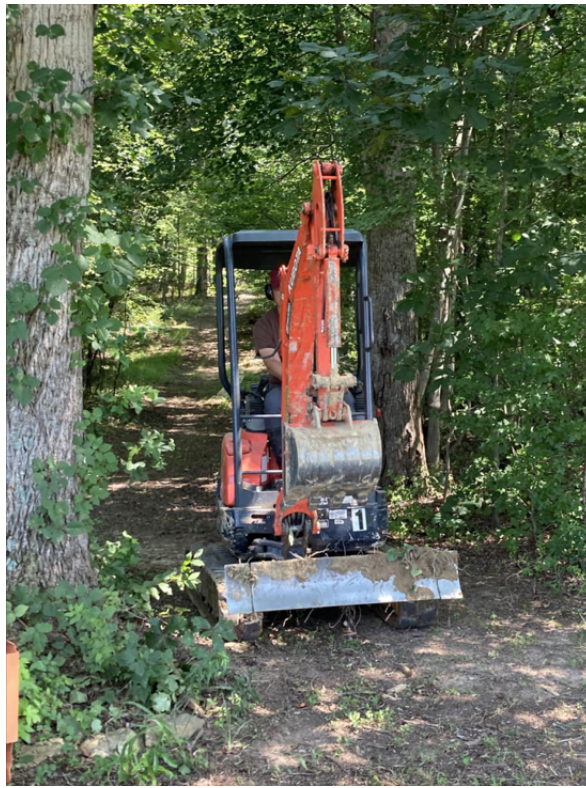
The Standards for Conservation Burial



A beloved volunteer finding her place amidst the Little Bluestem

A GRATITUDE CHALLENGE

We received a challenge from a dedicated Bluestem supporter who will donate \$10,000 toward the purchase of an excavator, if we can raise an additional **\$20,000 by the end of the year.** Owning an excavator is a top priority for Bluestem as it allows us to efficiently dig our graves. Currently we are leasing an excavator, which is expensive, and does not give us the flexibility we need. We are calling our supporters to join in this *Gratitude Challenge* to celebrate Bluestem's opening and the opportunity to serve many families long into the future. Please join this end-of-year challenge and help Bluestem be the proud owner of its very own excavator! [Donate here.](#)



Let's Get the Excavator

*"Given all that is happening in the world, walking out here, wandering on these pathways -- this is bliss."
Bluestem visitor*

We hope to see you at Bluestem on November 20th. If not then, perhaps sometime in the near future walking the trails. Weekdays, we are working in the fields or the cabin from 10am to 4pm. Every Friday is a volunteer workday from 9am-12pm. [Join us.](#)

We are so excited to be Opening Bluestem with you!

Heidi, Jeff and the entire Bluestem Team

THANK YOU to our amazing volunteers and contributors these last few months: Carol, Laura, Sidney, Lara, D, Allen, Meg, Noah, Meredith, Claire, Lee P., Lee W., Ann, Kathleen, Ann R., Courtney, Erica, Emily, Kallyn, Shawna, Jennifer, Seletha, Mark, Shenae, Beth, Franzi, Carl, Susan, Betty, Mel, Linda, Anna, Brenna, Hannah, Caitie, Emily-Kate, JC, Ginger, Sarah, Leo, Gabriel, Nancy, Amy, Dave, Geri, Tom, Jerry, Kristine, Sharron, Ken, Joyce, Bill, Kendy, Kelly, Jodie, Grace, Walter, Bill, Joanne, Kristin, Al, Lynn, Katherine, Evangeline, Kari, Callie, Marya, Jeanette and Robin.
