

From: [Alan Gowell](#)
To: [Town Admin](#)
Subject: Re: tree planting in cemetery
Date: Monday, September 14, 2026 1:44:11 PM

To the West Tisbury Cemetery Commissioners
From Alan Gowell, temporary assistant cemetery superintendent

We have had requests from 2 families recently asking to plant trees or bushes on their cemetery lots. I think this requires a policy decision from you. The present cemetery rule book states this is a decision of the superintendent.

My suggestion is to ban any plantings in the Lamberts Cove cemetery; that cemetery has an spare, open, old-fashioned look, which would be changed by a free-for-all policy of letting people plant whatever they want.

In the Village cemetery, I suggest, in addition to getting the permission of the superintendent, that the family must dedicate a minimum of a 5' x 5' grave space for the rootball of the tree, making that space unavailable for future interments.

I would also suggest you make a prohibition on Dwarf Alberta Spruce trees. One owner of single 5' x 10' grave space recently planted 4 of these "cute little trees" at the corners of her lot. In a few years, three-quarters of each of those trees will be growing over an abutters' lot. And after they are about 6 feet tall, they revert back to their non-dwarf nature and send out large branches. Please ban them.

Yours, until you can find a replacement,
Alan Gowell

On Mon, Sep 14, 2026 at 12:18 PM Town Admin <townadmin@westtisbury-ma.gov> wrote:

Hi Alan,

Do I have this right? You would like the board to consider banning tree planting in the cemetery because the trees and roots infringe on grave lots beyond the person that planted the trees? You noted that one of the cemeteries in Edgartown has banned them to keep the open "colonial feel" of the property?

Am I summarizing this correctly?

Thanks,

Jen

Jennifer Rand

Town Administrator

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Office Hours: Monday-Thursday 7:30 am – 3:30 pm