

Cleaning Markers and Monuments

Cleaning grave markers should only occur after careful consideration of long term needs and further upkeep. For example, cleaning markers essentially starts a cycle of ongoing upkeep to maintain the gains from the initial cleaning, so you will need to plan accordingly. Removing organic growth may make a monument look better for a short time but a shady environment will encourage re-growth of lichens or algae. Some experts recommend only cleaning markers once every four to six years because of the potential to harm the stone and accelerate the natural deterioration process.

GENERAL PRINCIPALS FOR CEMETERY PRESERVATION PROJECTS

- Do no harm; always respect the original historic fabric
- Use the gentlest means necessary to complete the task
- When in doubt consult a professional
- Carefully plan and document actions taken
- Quick or easy cures are often not a reasonable choice
- Each task will take longer than first anticipated

CLEANING GUIDELINES:

- Evaluate the marker's condition - only a sound stone should be cleaned. Never clean a monument if there are cracks, flaking or scaling, or if it has eroding granular surfaces. Avoid sealing a stone - it prevents the stone from breathing and will not prevent moisture from wicking up out of the ground.
- Identify the contaminant to be removed; then use the cleaning solution most appropriate for that type of contaminant. Generally, contaminants fall into one of two categories: organic or non-organic. Organics include lichen, algae and mosses. Non-organics are soot and other pollution deposits, which can be common in urban areas, often appearing as black crusty discolorations on stones. Because they are typically not water soluble, they are difficult to remove. Before starting to clean the entire marker, wet the stone and test your cleaning process in an inconspicuous area. Allow this to dry for several days and then determine if the results are acceptable before proceeding with further cleaning.
- Always start with the gentlest method for cleaning. This usually means using just clean water and a natural bristle scrub brush.
- Have plenty of water available. First, completely wet the stone with clean water; then scrub from the bottom up to prevent streaking. Finally, thoroughly rinse the stone. Cleaning is best done on an overcast day when the stone is cool, so drying will occur more slowly.

- Knowledgeable caretakers should train all volunteers before work begins and supervise the project to be sure no inadvertent harm is done to stones.
- Document the cleaning solutions, materials, and procedures used.

RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT

- Natural bristle brushes of various sizes, toothbrushes for intricate carvings, small hand broom, cottonswabs for test spots. Use wooden handled brushes; colored plastic could scuff and stain the stone.
Use no metal implements near historic stones.
- Unpainted wooden shims, craft sticks, or compressed air not to exceed 60psi for carefully removing debris.
- Clean white rags (other colors could transfer onto stone).
- Plastic pails, clean plastic jugs, or clean pump sprayers for water; garden hose. (***Pressure washing and sandblasting are never recommended.***) Maximum of 60 psi.
- Water.
- Protective glasses and goggles, rubber gloves.
- D/2 Biological Solution (<http://www.d2bio.com/>, <http://www.gravestonecleaner.com/>, <https://www.limeworks.us/product/d2-biological-solution/>) You can also purchase D/2 on Amazon.

CLEANING AGENTS

D/2 Biological Solution is the conservation/restoration industry preferred cleaning solution. This is an architectural anti-microbial product for removing lichen and other organic contaminants. Other non-ionic cleansers which are electrically neutral and contain no soluble salts, such as Vulpex, Orvus, and Photo-Flo can be used if D/2 Biological Solution is not available.

Recommended:

Cleaning Agent	Mix Rate (by volume)	Availability/Use
Clean water	No additives	All cleaning projects
D/2 Biological Solution	Full strength or mixed with water	To clean and remove organics, order from a D/2 distributor.

DO NOT USE:

- » Borax
- » Calgon
- » Clorox
- » Fantastic All Purpose Cleaner, Formula 409
- » Household detergents or soaps (e.g., Ivory)
- » Lime Away
- » Liquid chlorine
- » Muriatic Acid
- » Naval Jelly
- » Spic and Span, other abrasive cleaners
- » TSP

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