

Flag Retirement Memorial at Greendale Cemetery (Use, Care and Expectations)

Last revised: 4/28/22 by Nick Morgan

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Introduction

I created the flag retirement memorial at the Greendale Cemetery in collaboration with the cemetery board, and many community supporters. The idea of the memorial was to not only provide a place to take expired American flags (this has been done many times), but to also provide a place for flags to be respectfully and properly retired.

At the same time, scout troops can take advantage of the opportunity to show younger scouts the proper handling and retirement of Old Glory! This facility was not only created for scouting organizations, but also any military or veteran organization who may have proud, long-standing flag retirement traditions. We only ask two things; 1. Make a reservation request provided by our website at <https://troop.bsa604.org/>

On the home page, scroll down and click "Reserve the Flag Retirement Memorial." 2. Respect the facility by helping keep it in good condition, locking up before leaving, restocking wood that you have used, reporting any damage, and occasionally, lend a hand with some basic maintenance when it is time. This is a perfect opportunity for a troop service project!

A very important thing I wanted to ensure from the very beginning was that there were clear instructions on how to use and care for the facility. The facility is already subject to mother nature's wind, snow, rain and sun and so over time, it will wear down, and so it will need to be maintained and updated over time. The tasks are listed below.

Use and Care

Once you get your approved confirmation on your reservation, follow these steps.

1. Contact the Greendale Fire Department with the date of your ceremony to let them know you will be starting a fire at the cemetery to retire flags. They may decide to have someone oversee the ceremony, but at minimum, they will be aware and can decide how they want to handle.
2. If the ceremony is public, perhaps notify your local radio station or paper to let them know the date, time and location, so that people can come and observe said ceremony.
3. There are combination locks for the shed and fire alter lid. These combinations are set all the same, and you will get this combination ahead of time.
4. Remove the lid from the firepit and put it in the shed, or over near the shed so it is not in the way for the ceremony, or any bystanders. Close the shed doors for the ceremony.
5. There is wood in the shed to use for the ceremony, but please plan to bring some firewood of your own to restock the wood that you use. We're not looking log for log, just that there is always enough wood left in the shed for the next ceremony. It's also nice to have some tinder and kindling to get it started.
6. Start your fire about an hour before the ceremony. You want a good bed of coals in preparation for the flags.
7. If you have a lot of flags to retire, keep in mind the constant layering of flags on the fire creates hotter-than-normal temperatures as you get a lot of material in the fire ring. You may need to pause, or slow down the ceremony to allow time for the flags to burn down. Seek to avoid a fire that is too tall or shooting hot ash and embers into the air.
8. Conduct your ceremony, and once all flags are deposited into the fire, you should allow time for the fire to burn down. You can spread the logs apart to help facilitate the burndown. There should be little to no flame, and only coals in the fire altar before putting the lid back on the fire altar. The idea is to allow these coals to turn to ash, and keep them dry so that once they are cooled, the ashes can be scooped and sifted the next day, or days after.
9. **Please take note** the lid only fits one way. When you line up the slots, ensure the lid sits fully level on the fire altar capstones. Do not force it, if it does not fit, simply turn the lid 180 degrees so the slots line up. Lock the fire alter lid on with two of the locks.
10. Replenish the wood and kindling in the shed, and make sure all tools are put away. There may be some times where there are boxes with flags in there. These are in case you need more flags for your ceremony. Feel free to use, but organize a bit if needed. Keep boxes of flags on one side, and stacks of wood on the other side. Be careful when stacking wood in the shed, since wood is heavy and the shed is plastic. Avoid letting logs slam against the shed walls.
11. When the ashes are cool and no hot coals remain, (typically the next day) use the scoop and metal bucket to scoop ashes from the fire altar. Take the bucket of ashes, and the sifter box to sift ashes on veterans graves. The cemetery will provide grave markers of veterans graves. These ashes, are only meant for our country's heroic veterans.
12. Always make sure tools are put away and the shed is properly locked before leaving.

13. **Remember**, leave no trace. Walk the vicinity to make sure there is no trash left laying. If you observe something out of sorts, please report it either directly over the website, or by logging on the clipboard hanging in the shed.

This is a work in progress. If you have tips or suggestions, you can also log this on the clipboard, or report it to us over our website. Thank you for helping take care of the Flag Memorial at Greendale Cemetery.

Maintenance tasks to be performed

These tasks are to be performed after every flag retirement ceremony

- Ensure that the fire is burned down to coals before putting the lid on the fire altar. The lid will heat up fast, so don't touch it after you have put it on and locked it.
- Replenish wood and kindling for the next ceremony.
- Put tools away and lock the shed before leaving.
- Search the area around the fire alter walk and patio and pick up any trash.
- Remaining ashes (after they have cooled) will be sifted over veterans graves in the cemetery. There is a sifter box and scoop in the wood shed to do this.
- If any issues occur or you have any suggestions, please log them on the clipboard in the shed. We will check it when we check the flag drop box.

Tasks to be performed as needed over time

- Clean weeds from between the walk and patio pavers. Pressure washed as needed.
- Monitor the lid for rust. The hot heat remaining from the coals after a fire will heat the lid and it will need sanded and repainted occasionally.
- Check that the tools and sifter box are in good shape for use. Repair or replace as needed.
- Check to be sure there is enough wood for the next flag retirement ceremony.
- Weed eat around the shed, walk and patio if needed.
- Check the condition of the rope on the flag pole and absolutely watch the condition of the flag! There should be no tattered ends or torn seams.

Make a Reservation Request

To request a reservation, please complete the form on our website.

<https://troop.bsa604.org/greendale-cemetery-flag-retirement-memorial/>

The reservation is emailed to a number of people who must review and approve your request. The plan is to respond by email within 1 week of your request. We thank you for your patience, and we look forward to using and maintaining the flag retirement memorial cooperatively, proudly and for a long time into the future.

Respectfully,

Nick Morgan
Troop 604, Eagle Project 2022