

Adopt-A-Plot Program Rules & Regulations (2026 Edition)

Thank you for volunteering with HCC’S Adopt-A-Plot Program. We appreciate your willingness to care for these special places. The gravesites included in this program are enclosed by historic stone coping or metal fencing and are not currently tended to by the site owner or their descendants. By partnering with dedicated community members like you, we’re able to provide thoughtful, hands-on care to these final resting places in a way that honors both their history and their dignity.

Your participation helps sustain not only the beauty of the grounds, but also our broader commitment to environmental stewardship. We encourage volunteers to plant pollinator friendly species, which enrich the landscape while supporting beekeeping, arboretum maintenance, and the many interconnected ecological initiatives that make HCC a special place.

The following Rules & Regulations are designed with deep respect for the fact that each Adopt-A-Plot is a final resting place and a space where loved ones may visit one day. Our shared goal is to preserve a sense of dignity and reverence and welcome community members who wish to contribute to the care and beauty of these sites through thoughtful gardening. Adopt-A-Plot sites are distinct from plots with Interment Right Ownership and follow a separate set of guidelines. If you wish to garden on a plot for which you hold Interment Rights, please refer to the appropriate regulations and contact the Interment Department for further guidance and approval.

Please reach out to adopt@congressionalcemetery.org with any questions or concerns.

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1. Program Commitment & Renewal

- 1.1 Plot adoptions run for one calendar year.
- 1.2 Renewals are due annually by March 1.
- 1.3 Renewal reminders are sent by February 1 via email.
- 1.4 Plots not renewed may be reassigned.
- 1.5 Volunteers may rescind an adoption by emailing adopt@congressionalcemetery.org.

2. Access, Hours, & Dogs

- 2.1 Gardening may take place anytime the cemetery is open (7am-7pm daily).
- 2.2 Cemetery closures for burials and events are always posted online on our events calendar - automated email and text closure notifications are available by request.
- 2.3 K9 Members may bring their dogs while gardening, but dogs must remain on leash while actively gardening, unless monitored by another present adult.
- 2.4 During Saturday dog closure hours (11am-3pm), volunteers may not bring dogs while gardening.

3. Vehicles & On-Ground Transport

- 3.1 Vehicles may enter the cemetery grounds only if necessary (floral/mulch delivery).
- 3.2 All vehicles must check in and check out at the gate with staff and may only enter during business hours (Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm).
- 3.3 Saturday vehicle access during K9 closure hours requires gate check in/out and should be limited to essential use only.
- 3.4 Vehicles must stay on cemetery streets and may not drive on slate paths, brick paths, or unpaved areas.
- 3.5 Carts are available for volunteer use and must remain onsite.

4. Tools & Personal Items

- 4.1 The Tool Library (located on the south side of the Gatehouse garage) provides community use of shovels, rakes, watering cans, carts and other common tools.
- 4.2 Tools must remain onsite and be returned promptly after use.
- 4.3 Additional tools may be requested via adopt@congressionalcemetery.org.
- 4.4 Personal tools or watering cans may not be stored at plots and will be removed.

5. Water Use

- 5.1 Water is available at spigots throughout the grounds. Hoses are placed at spigots with installed hose hangers and may not be moved to other spigots without approval.
- 5.2. Hoses may not be pulled tightly around or draped over headstones and must be coiled and placed back on a hose hanger after use.
- 5.3 Sprinklers are not allowed. Watering cans and jugs may not be left at plots.
- 5.4 Water is turned off in winter and restored in early spring; volunteers will be notified via email when this occurs.

6. Planting Standards

6.1 Plantings must not obscure names on stones or memorials. Plots must remain neat and aesthetically pleasing without debris or tool/gardening storage left onsite.

6.2 No invasive species may be planted. Volunteers are encouraged to use native species and pollinator-friendly plants. (see [VA DCR invasive plant list](#))

6.3 Non-hardy plants may only be used as annuals and may not be wrapped or covered to overwinter.

6.4 No trees, bushes, vines, vegetables, or fruit plants may be planted.

6.5 No planters permitted; all gardening must take place in the ground.

6.6 Removing existing shrubs, markers, or fencing requires approval.

7. Groundcover & Mulch

7.1 Artificial turf is prohibited.

7.2 Approved groundcovers include sod, creeping phlox, ground sedum, and mondo grass.

7.3 Approved commercial mulch is aged, shredded hardwood bark mulch. Woodchips produced at HCC and stored at the East End bays are available to all and delivery to plots may be arranged by emailing adopt@congressionalcemetery.org please include the date you will be using the mulch so delivery is coordinated appropriately.

7.4 Bagged mulch and soil must be used promptly and may not be stored at the plot.

7.5 Prohibited mulches include rubber, dyed bark, bark nuggets, gravel, and stone.

8. Decorations & Non-Plant Materials

8.1 Non-plant items and decorations are prohibited within the Adopt-A-Plot program.

8.2 All tools, soil/mulch bags, seating, and carts must be removed from the plot upon leaving the site.

8.3 Unauthorized items may be removed and discarded by staff without notice.

9. Chemicals & Soil Treatments

9.1 Chemical use is strongly discouraged. Please request organic guidance via email.

10. Supports & Barriers

10.1 Garden stakes may be used for plant support.

10.2 Landscape fabric and plastic sheeting are prohibited.

10.3 Approved biodegradable barriers include untreated cardboard, newspaper, burlap, and jute (must be mulched over).

11. Debris Removal

11.1 Volunteers may pile plant-debris near their plot for pickup and disposal. Please do not allow piles to slowly grow; email adopt@congressionalcemetery.org promptly for HCC staff pickup on the next business day.

11.2 In-organic debris must be disposed of by the volunteer in appropriate trash receptacles.

12. Communication & Enforcement

12.1 All communication should be directed to adopt@congressionalcemetery.org.

Photos may be included when helpful.

12.2 Prohibited plants or items may be removed by staff without notice.

12.3 Rules may be amended without notice; the current version of Adopt-A-Plot Rules & Regulations will always be available at www.congressionalcemetery.org.

13. Google Group (Community Sharing)

13.1 Volunteers may use the Google Group for plant questions and sharing transplants.

13.2 Notify the group before dividing perennials.

13.3 Healthy perennials should not be discarded.

14. Glossary

Adopt-A-Plot Program: A volunteer program where community members care for pre-approved older gravesites that no longer have family caretakers and are surrounded by fencing or coping.

Annuals: Plants that live for just one growing season.

Google Group: The online community for Adopt-A-Plot volunteers to ask questions and share plants.

Groundcover: Low-growing plants used to cover soil (e.g., phlox, sedum, mondo grass).

Interment Rights: Legal ownership rights for a burial plot; separate from the Adopt-A-Plot program.

Invasive Species: Plants that spread aggressively and harm the ecosystem

Native Species: Plants naturally found in the region; encouraged because they support local wildlife.

Perennials: Plants that return year after year.

Plot: An individual gravesite, or a group of gravesites.

Pollinator Species: plants that provide essential nectar and pollen for bees, butterflies, birds, and other beneficial insects helping support a healthy ecosystem