Cemetery Clearing and Restoration Guidance for Volunteers at East End and Evergreen Cemeteries

Thank you for volunteering your time and effort to help restore these historic places. East End and Evergreen Cemeteries are sacred ground, where African American Richmonders laid their loved ones to rest for decades. They are also vital outdoor archives that contain information about black Richmonders that may not exist anywhere else. Please take great care with the headstones, markers, and monuments on which this information is inscribed. — The Friends of East End Cemetery and the Friends of Evergreen Cemetery

The word PLEASE is implied in all of our requests.

DO wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, and sturdy, closed-toe shoes. (A hat is recommended.) They will protect you from scratchy vines, thorns, poison ivy, and bugs.

DO be aware that there is poison ivy in the cemetery. Volunteer leaders will show you what it looks like, but if you forget, please ask. If you think you have come in contact with it, the best thing to DO is: Wash the affected area with soap and cool water, rinse, then wash again within eight hours of exposure.

DON'T chop down living trees. We’re here to remove weeds, vines, dead trees, branches, ivy, roots, etc.

DO leave headstones, temporary markers, and other items that may be related to a burial where you find them.

DO take care when pulling vines out of trees. They are often tangled up with broken branches, etc. Be mindful.

DO put only brush—leaves, logs, any plant material you pull up—in the Dumpsters.

DO use only your hands to remove headstones from tangles of vines or from beneath inches of dirt.

DON'T use tools on any headstone, marker, or monument. Nothing but hands should touch the stones.

DO use a small tool such as a garden trowel to scrape around a stone that is embedded in the soil. Under the direction of the group leader, water and a soft brush may be used to gently clean the headstones.

DON'T stand on or walk across headstones. They are fragile—and they are one-of-a-kind objects.

DO watch your step. This is an old cemetery with vines, stumps, and half-buried stones that are trip hazards. So, parents and guardians, DO keep an eye your children.

DON'T leave tools lying on the ground. Those cartoons where someone steps on a rake and gets whacked in the face when the handle swings up from the ground? It really happens. Lean tools against a tree where people can see them—or put them away when you’re finished—to prevent accidents.

DON'T use power tools unless experienced with them and directed to a particular area by a group leader.

DON'T make rubbings, which can damage headstones. Photography is a great way to capture a stone.

DO take photos and share on social media. The most common hashtags are #eastendcemetery and #evergreencemeteryrva.

DO carry out all your trash and place it in a trash bag.

DO check yourself (and your kids) for ticks when you get home. Spring has come early, so bugs might be out.

DO tell your friends, family, and coworkers about the great work going on at the cemeteries.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.