

## 《Environmentally-friendly funerals growing in popularity》

China is currently marking its annual Tomb Sweeping Festival, an occasion which has put the spotlight on funerals, burials and cremations in the country. One trend that has gained in popularity over the past years is giving loved ones an environmentally-friendly send-off.

A low-cost, no-frills burial that's at harmony with mother nature. Those people chose to let their loved ones leave the world, as they have tried to live in it. The method differs from Chinese traditional funerals. But that hasn't stopped the growing popularity.

"I don't want a grave, it's meaningless for me, the earth cannot accommodate each person with one grave," said a Shanghai resident.

Such an end-of-life process is simple and environmentally friendly.

"It doesn't matter where the bodies are buried as long as we have the memories in our hearts for good."

Shanghai is growing old at the fastest pace in the country. A shortage of plots in cemeteries, and rising prices, have led to the emergence of green burials.

"All of the cemeteries in Shanghai will be full within the next 5 years if we dispose all of the bodies by cremation," said Zhang Songjie, Director of SH Division for Funeral, Burial Management.

Shanghai authorities have been trying to alleviate the imbalance between supply and demand, by offering subsidies for families choosing green burials.

"Ashes are placed in biodegradable urns, which are placed in the grassland and covered with flowers. They become part of the earth within 3 months," said Zhao Xiaohu, Director of Shanghai Fushou Cemetery.

Land-saving has become a top priority when the city plans expansion of current cemeteries. The land space for each grave under construction has been cut to an area closer to the minimum size required by law.

The local authority said 30 percent of bodies are now disposed off through green burials due to years of promotions and government subsidies. But they say challenges still lie ahead in raising public awareness.