



Cemeteries Provide Ideal Environments for Mosquitoes

Cemeteries are prime locations for mosquitoes to reproduce due to expansive grounds, shaded areas, and numerous containers holding standing water. Mosquitoes are not only a nuisance, they are a major threat to public health because they can transmit a variety of debilitating diseases including West Nile virus, Zika, and dengue. It is critical that cemetery managers and employees work with their local mosquito and vector control districts to find sustainable solutions to limit mosquitoes.



Cemeteries can be a major source of mosquitoes due to:

- Standing water in small, hidden areas such as flower vases
- Abundant flowers and other food sources for mosquitoes
- Presence of animals and humans for blood meals from sunrise to dusk
- Shaded areas and favorable temperatures



(Left) Mosquito larvae in a lab.

(Right) Larvae found in a pot outside.



The best way to prevent mosquitoes is to limit standing water. Mosquitoes can develop from eggs to adults in very small amounts of water. Without standing water, mosquitoes cannot complete their life cycle.

How To Prevent Mosquitoes on Cemetery Grounds

There are many ways cemetery employees can help protect the health of visitors and staff by reducing the risk of mosquitoes on cemetery grounds:

- Fill flower vases with sand or water crystals to eliminate mosquito habitats
- Dump and scrub all containers weekly
- Place mosquito-killing bacteria into containers monthly
- Change irrigation practices to limit standing water
- Encourage the use of vases with openings at the bottom so water can drain away
- Encourage the use of silk or artificial flowers/decorative plants
- Encourage visitors to lay flowers on top of a grave (outside of a container) instead of placing flowers in a vase
- Discourage the placement of objects at grave sites that can hold water, such as cans, bottles, and other containers
- Repair damaged irrigation to prevent leaks and standing water



Vector Control employee inspecting cemetery vase for signs of mosquitoes



Landscaper installing a new drip irrigation system to decrease standing water



Artificial flowers at headstones instead of fresh flowers

Mosquito-borne diseases are an on-going concern in California, especially as temperatures increase and invasive mosquitoes continue to establish in more areas of California. MVCAC encourages cemetery staff to assess their grounds and practices to determine how to best limit mosquito populations. In addition, local mosquito and vector control districts can create specialized plans of action for cemeteries to reduce their mosquito populations.

