

CLEANING HEADSTONES

Student volunteers should clean slant stones ONLY. Upright stones can tip over and break if the seal that attaches them to the foundation has become weak. You must NOT break or tip over a stone. It is ESTIMATED that it will take 12-15 minutes to properly clean a stone. Some will take less, some more. Plan your volunteer time accordingly and remember to take before and after pictures.

The best time to clean headstones is right after a good soaking rain because the lichen is wet and doesn't stick to the granite as much. However, stones can also be cleaned when dry.

1. Take a picture of the stone BEFORE you begin the cleaning process.
2. Thoroughly soak a towel and put it, dripping wet, onto the stone.
3. Pat it down so that it touches all of the surface. Leave the stone to become completely wet.
4. Move to the next stone that needs cleaning.
5. Perform the same first three steps on this stone and then go back to the previous stone.
6. Now that the stone is wet, use the paint stirrer to push / scrape the lichen off the FACE of the stone. The narrow side of the stirrer works well to get into the engraving but popsicle sticks, plastic cuticle pushers, old toothbrushes or denta-picks work well also.

DO NOT USE ANYTHING METAL. DO NOT USE ANYTHING METAL.

7. Rinse the stone often, (a large sponge works well here) to assess your progress.
8. When you are satisfied with the FACE of the stone, use a brush (a toilet bowl brush or similar scrub brush works well) to scour the sides and back of the stone, as needed. (The IMPORTANT side to clean is the FACE; but don't completely ignore the sides and back.)
9. Do one last THOROUGH rinse and take a picture of the stone to show your handiwork.
10. Pass by the stone that has the soaking towel on it and go to the next stone that needs cleaning.
11. Perform steps 1-3 on this new stone and then go back to the previous stone with the towel.
12. Perform steps 6-9 on this stone and then begin the leap frog progress at step 10.

It is important not to damage the FACE of the stones so **don't** SCOUR them. Be firm, but not rough. It is not expected that the stone will look brand new. In some cases, they are decades old and have never been cleaned! Any cleaning you do will give the stone a fresher look and will be appreciated.

DO NOT USE BLEACH OR ANY CLEANING PRODUCT ON ANY HEADSTONE.

The stones are made of a porous material and harsh chemicals only create more crevices in which the lichen can grow. This makes more work for the next person trying to clean it in years to come. Dark stains or discoloration will not be markedly improved by the above methods. **IF** your family stone is in this condition, it is best to hire a professional cleaning service to remove the stains.