



The entrance to the Egyptian avenue is pictured in Highgate Cemetery in north London. — AFP photos



Tombs in the Circle of Lebanon are pictured in Highgate Cemetery.



Overgrown vegetation surrounds gravestones in Highgate Cemetery.

Climate change threatens London's Karl Marx cemetery

Global warming is threatening London's historic Highgate Cemetery, an overgrown oasis housing graves of notable figures from Karl Marx to pop star George Michael, its custodians say. Concerned at rampant fungi, freak storms and shifting graves, the cemetery's custodians are now seeking expert help to ensure its survival. They have launched a competition for landscape designers to come up with a strategy to help the north London cemetery withstand the warming climate in the next decades. "The plan has got to stretch out for the next 20-plus years and during that time global warming is going to continue," said the chairman of the Friends of Highgate Cemetery, Martin Adeney.

The hillside cemetery has graves of famous figures including the novelist George Eliot and "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" author Douglas Adams. It is still being used for burials. The British pop singer George Michael, who died in 2016, has an unmarked grave there, according to his family's wishes. The cemetery attracts some 100,000 visitors annually, up 30 percent in the last seven years, though they were banned during the coronavirus lockdown.

'Pests and diseases'

Despite the cemetery's charm, there is visible damage to the gravestones and catacombs, caused by a period of neglect and the rising temperatures. Some graves have warning tape tied round them and signs saying they are unsafe. Others are leaning or are flat on the ground. Lids of above-ground tombs are skewed off and self-seeded trees are growing in narrow gaps between tombstones.



A gravestone damaged by tree roots is seen in Highgate Cemetery.

Chief gardener Frank Cano pointed to a 19th-century stone tomb whose top is gradually being pushed off the base by a nearby tree, causing fresh chips in the stonework. A greater degree of shrinking and expanding of London's clay soil is causing the elaborate stone tombs to shift, said Cano, who has worked at the cemetery for six years. In turn this affects the roots of the trees growing wild between the graves, making them more unstable.

"The threat to the cemetery is from our trees, from the ivy, from the brambles. It's basically nature trying to take the cemetery

back." Winds have got stronger, too, Cano said, and warmer temperatures are causing fungi to thrive and trees to suffer "many more pests and diseases". The cemetery last year had to fell its centrepiece, a great Cedar of Lebanon, as it was afflicted by a bad fungus infestation. In addition, increased rainfall is washing away gravel paths and overflowing antiquated drainage systems.

Cost of millions

The landscape plan will include planting trees that cope better with climate change. Cano says he hopes the new plan will "keep the history running alongside nature" so that "the cemetery can still be here in hundreds of years to come." This is not the first crisis for the cemetery, which dates back to the 1830s, and has no public funding.

By the 1970s, the original owners had abandoned it as unprofitable and it lay derelict in a shocking state. Graves and vaults were broken into and skeletons exposed, until local residents took over to run it as volunteers. The new planned renovations will "undoubtedly" be the biggest since then, said Adeney, with the final cost unknown. "We're into the millions, of course," he said, adding that the National Lottery Heritage Fund was a potential source. The Friends are also seeking proposals from architects on ways to make the site more visitor-friendly while still respectful of the dead. These could include a visitor centre, new toilets and possibly a cafe. "Some areas will become clearer", said Adeney, "but we will be very careful." —AFP

Our Spaces without the clutter

By Engineer Yousef AL-Samhan

Can we live in a space without the clutter?

Clutter is a compulsive collector who cannot bear to put worthless things in the bin (garbage) or throw anything away that is broken. They have to have all their possessions on show, and hence they always have a dusty house because it is so difficult to clean. At first glance, their home looks like a tip, but it is often ordered, just very busy and full. So, can we cure the clutter? Yes, we can, we just have to want to change. With the little pushing and some heartache, it can be done listed here some simple steps we can follow to cure the clutter-bug.

Step 1

Act as if you are about to move house. Take everything out of the room. (Do this one room at a time)

Step 2

Bring back the most important things for the room. For example, a living room, the sofa, couch, chairs, TV, stereo, side tables, or the bedroom, bed side tables.

Step 3

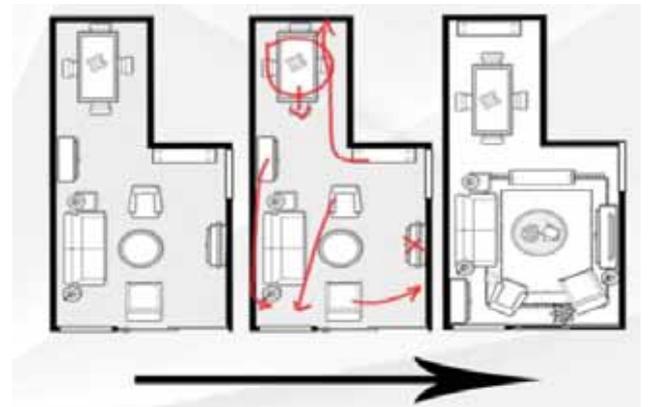
Work out where all the important things sit in the space. Move them so the space flows and that you can move freely around the room. Then sit down and have a look around, breathe in, how do you feel? You should feel liberated. You will find that your chest feels lighter; the air seems to flow better.

Step 4

Select a few things at a time to bring back into the room to decorate with. Paintings, pictures, a vase, a rug, lamps. Do it slowly and feel how the space is changing. Pick out the best items that you want to show, do not use all of them.

Step 5

Stop! Yes, do not keep going. Less is better in a room. Put all the remaining items in storage until you are happy with the new space. Later sort through it all, keep what is reusable, and



donate the rest to a good charity or sell it. So, you can cure the clutter-bug. You can do this: we can cure the clutter and create a potential interior decorator out of you now.

Note: Interior design consultant and CEO of MY12 Creations Interior Design and contracting Co.