



The most natural gift in the world

Your Guide to Gifts in Wills

The health of
soil, plants, animals
and (hu)mans is
one and indivisible



We are all part of nature's cycle

As a farmer, I'm acutely aware of the seasons.

Our lives, like our work, must harmonise with the planet's rhythms. There's a time to sow and a time to reap. In the summer we enjoy the bounties of harvest. And in the depths of winter, as we struggle through wind and rain, we are comforted by the knowledge that spring will come again.

There's reassurance in this turning of the seasons. It's a daily reminder of the natural cycle on which we all depend. But I fear things are changing.

I see it every day here on the farm. Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and unpredictable, disrupting all our plans. And the same story is playing out right across the world. Intensive farming techniques have degraded 40% of the Earth's soil, decimated our wildlife populations and contributed to a climate crisis that now threatens life on Earth as we know it.

You and I have known for a long time that nothing could be more important than healing people and planet through better stewardship of our land and animals. That's why, through our involvement with the Soil Association, we are doing what we can to help right now in our lifetime.

But of course, we have our seasons too.

During our time here, we steward our world and bring in our harvest until, like every living thing, we too will return to the soil. But that's not the end of our story. Because even in our passing we can feed the seeds that will nourish the next generation.

That's what I feel I am doing by including a gift to the Soil Association in my Will.

I have been an organic farmer for 35 years and involved with the Soil Association throughout that whole period. But of course my time, like all our times, will pass, and we must hand the baton to the next generation to continue our work. So I do hope you too will consider including the Soil Association in your Will. Because as the seasons turn and the years go by, your support will continue to be needed as much as ever.

Thank you.



Helen Browning,
Organic farmer and
Chief Executive of the Soil Association

You've spent a lifetime defending and caring for the soil that sustains us all

Do you remember a time when anyone who showed an interest in organic food was considered eccentric? When our crops were sprayed with DDT? When livestock throughout the EU was routinely fed antibiotics and fresh fruit and vegetables were hardly ever seen on a school menu? Perhaps you even remember a time when the organic certification – the gold standard for wholesome, compassionate, sustainably produced food – simply didn't exist.

**It's really not so long ago.
It may well be within your lifetime.**

It was only in the 70s, for example, that the Soil Association Certification was launched. Aspall's apple juice was their first organic licensee – perhaps you bought a bottle? And it wasn't until 1983 that a full ban on DDT was introduced. Maybe you took part in the campaign that led to the ban.

Sadly, we still have a long way to go in improving the treatment and welfare of farm animals. But at the end of the 90s, our long running campaign did finally lead to an EU ban on six antibiotic feed additives. And as for our children's diet – our Food For Life programme is putting fresh, nutritious meals on more and more school menus every year.

It's a massive amount of change in a comparatively short time. And you have been at the heart of it all.

Because through your involvement and interest in all of these issues, you've helped us to achieve every one of these successes. You've been part of a radical transformation in food production that is benefitting our farmers, our livestock, our wildlife, our health, our mental well-being and our entire environment.

Of course, there is still much work to be done. And the good news is, you can continue to be part of it forever.



I joined the Soil Association a long time ago. When I was making my Will, I wanted to include charities that reflect my values and the Soil Association looks at wildlife, the natural environment, and the sustainability of the soil, which are all so critical.

Alice, Soil Association member since 1999

A photograph of four sheep with light-colored wool and dark faces, standing in a lush green field. A tree trunk is visible on the left side of the frame. The sheep are looking towards the camera.

‘Care for nature and nature will care for us’

Even when you're gone, you can continue to nourish the soil and every living thing that relies on it

There's no doubt that the last 50 years have seen a remarkable sea change in our approach to food production. Today we have a greater understanding of our place in the natural world and the delicate interdependency that exists between all living things.

But so much damage has been done – and all too often, continues to be done – that we still have a long way to go before a true and natural balance can be restored.

For the sake of future generations, it's essential that the work we have begun together continues.

Over the coming decades, we're determined to establish a nationwide farming system that nurtures wildlife, supports biodiversity and works in true harmony with the rest of nature. A system where the soil is fertilised by freely grazing cows and sheep. Where trees and grasslands soak up carbon and provide welcoming habitats for wildlife. Where pigs and poultry live healthily outdoors, foraging for natural waste.

This type of natural farming – or agroecology – not only represents our best hope of feeding future generations sustainably. It is the only sane response to the climate and nature crises we are currently facing.

With a gift in your Will, you can make sure the seeds you have sown come to full fruition.

A Will is such an important document. It's not just a necessary piece of admin. It's an opportunity to ensure that your love and care lives on. A chance to nurture and support every one and every thing that you cherish in life.

By including a gift to the Soil Association – however big or small – your love for our beautiful, fruitful, natural world will never die. Long after you are gone, you will still be tending the soil and harvesting its bounty for the benefit of future generations.



‘The soil feeds the tree whose dying leaves feed the soil’



This is such a wonderful planet and we have to protect it. As a novice organic gardener and long time Soil Association member, I've done what I can all my life. But human ignorance and neglect have had drastic consequences for the natural world. That's why I've included the Soil Association in my Will. Because I want this all important work to continue after I'm gone.

David, Soil Association member since the 1960s

Every one of us needs a Will

A professionally written and legally witnessed Will is the only way to ensure your wishes are met after you die.

It doesn't matter how much or little you think you have. Most people underestimate what their collected assets – usually referred to as their 'estate' – are worth. But however large or small, having a Will means not only that your wishes will be clearly understood after your death, but also that those wishes will be efficiently and effectively carried out. That can give you peace of mind now and save your loved ones from a great deal of unnecessary stress and upset in the future.

For most of us, the first priority when writing a Will is to take care of our family and friends. To make absolutely sure your wishes are clear and that your Will is respected, we strongly recommend using a solicitor or professional Will writer. This booklet does not constitute legal advice.

If you already have a Will, it is really important that you keep it up to date so that it reflects any changing circumstances in your life. Small alterations can be made to an existing Will by adding what is known as a 'codicil'. For more substantive changes it may be advisable to write a new Will. A solicitor or professional Will writer will be able to advise you on this.





Including a gift to the Soil Association is easy and inexpensive

Once you've taken care of your family and friends, you can also include a gift to the cause or causes that are closest to your heart.

For you that might mean wanting to support animal welfare in our farming system. It might mean restoring our wildlife populations or making sure our children have healthy, nutritious diets. Or maybe your priority is the all-important health of our natural environment. A gift in your Will to the Soil Association, is a gift to support all of these inextricably interlinked issues.

There are three types of gift you might like to consider:

- A **'residuary gift'** is a share of what remains of your estate once your other wishes have been carried out.
- A **'pecuniary gift'** is a financial donation of a fixed amount.

- A **'specific gift'** is a possession or item such as jewellery, property or shares.

Many people see a residuary gift as the ideal way to support a charity like the Soil Association because it ensures your immediate loved ones take first priority. Also, unlike a pecuniary gift, it is less likely to have decreased in value by the time of your death due to inflation.

Once you have decided on the type of gift that is right for you, you will just need to tell your solicitor or Will Writer our registered charity number and address:

- **In England and Wales:**
Soil Association,
Spear House, 51 Victoria Street,
Bristol BS1 6AD.
Reg charity no: 206862
- **In Scotland:**
Soil Association Scotland,
20 Potterrow,
Edinburgh, EH8 9BL.
Reg charity no: SC039168



We're here to help

Your Will is a highly personal document, a living declaration of all that matters most in your life. We completely understand that as such it deserves your time and consideration.

We hope this booklet has been helpful as you take that time. If you have any questions it hasn't answered and would like to discuss them in person, we are here to help. You can contact Siobhan Veale, our Gifts in Wills Officer, in complete confidence by phone or email:

Email: giftsinwills@soilassociation.org

Telephone: 0117 914 2432

If you have already decided to include the Soil Association in your Will, you are of course under no obligation to let us know. However, if you're happy to share your thoughts we'd be delighted to hear from you. It's always a pleasure to hear from members and supporters, and we'd love the opportunity to thank you. So please feel free to contact Siobhan by phone or email. Alternatively you can complete the attached form and post it to Siobhan.

You can also contact Siobhan if you require this booklet in an alternative format.



Glossary of legal terms

Will: A legal document setting out what you want to happen to your estate when you die.

Estate: Everything you own and any debts you have at the time of your death. Any debts will be paid out of the value of your estate.

Legacy or Bequest: A gift left in your Will.

Beneficiary: Any person or organisation to whom you leave a gift in your Will.

Codicil: An addition or amendment to an existing Will.

Executor: The person or people you choose to carry out the provisions in your Will in the event of your death.

A Testator/Testatrix: The person making a Will.

Intestate: The term to describe a person who dies without having made a Will.

Residue: What's left of an estate after funeral expenses, debts, legacies and taxes have all been paid.

Inheritance Tax: A tax deducted from larger estates. Including a gift to a charity such as the Soil Association can ease your inheritance tax burden, as money left to a charity or spouse is not taxed. However, Inheritance Tax can be complicated so should be discussed with your solicitor.



Questions you might have

Why should I make a Will?

Making a Will is the only way you can be sure your wishes will be met after you die. Dying without a Will – 'intestate' – can cause unnecessary distress to family and friends.

Can I write my own Will?

Any errors in Wills can cause problems and make it invalid. That is why we strongly recommend that you use a qualified solicitor or professional Will writer.

Who should I choose as my executor?

Your executor is the person or people you choose to look after your estate in the event of your death. It can be any person that you know and trust – a close friend, a relative or your solicitor.

Can including the Soil Association in my Will reduce inheritance tax?

Including a charity like the Soil Association in your Will can reduce the tax burden on your beneficiaries. However, the rules do change frequently so you should discuss them with your solicitor.

What if I already have a Will?

You can amend an existing Will to include the Soil Association very simply by asking a solicitor to draw up a 'codicil'.

Should I tell the Soil Association I've included you in my Will?

Your Will is a very personal document and you are under no obligation to let us know if you have included a gift to us. However, it is enormously helpful if we do know your intentions. That way we can make sure we only send you information that is helpful and relevant to your circumstances and invite you to appropriate events. We'd also like the chance to say "Thank you"!



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Charity registered in England and Wales
no.206862 and in Scotland no.SC039168.