

expectancy – its inhabitants live longer than people in any other country in continental Europe), but that isn't stopping a growing number of people from planning ahead and exploring some more unusual options.

### Living legacy

Cemeteries are traditional resting places, but space in Switzerland is at a premium: After a number of years (as specified by the particular canton), relatives of the deceased are required to clear away the gravestone, so the plot can be re-used. Other land use concerns – including those from environmental groups who contend that casket burial contaminates water and soil – have led people to seek out more eco-friendly alternatives, including cremation.

Cremation in Switzerland dates back to 1889, when the first crematorium (the third such facility in Europe) was built, and today it is a popular alternative to burial: The Swiss opt to be cremated 75 per cent of the time. Families must then decide what to do with the ashes. For some, a Friedwald burial is the answer.

Friedwald is the brainchild of Ueli Sauter, who started the company in 1993 after the death of a dear friend. The concept is both simple and touchingly symbolic: Families can bury their loved one's ashes at the base of a pre-selected tree in a natural forest. The monument to the person's memory becomes a living tree, marked only by a small painted sign or plaque. Land registries protect the over 60 Friedwald locations across Switzerland for up to 99 years.

At 4,900 Swiss francs, a Friedwald tree doesn't come cheap,

but price wasn't what 59-year-old Myrtha Niedermann was thinking about when she chose hers – a sun-dappled cherry overlooking the river in Mammern, Canton Thurgau.

"I have no family, only my faithful pets," Niedermann says, noting that she would like to be buried with her animals, a relatively common practice in Friedwald forests. "I have no one to maintain my grave, and I would not like to be buried in a common grave." Indeed, many Friedwald customers take comfort in the zero-maintenance aspect of a Friedwald burial, not wanting to be a burden to their loved ones.

While Niedermann says that not all her friends understand her unconventional plans, she knows she has made the right decision. "I love the forest," she says. "I'm very glad that Friedwald exists."

### Click here to R.I.P.

Aside from physical remains, there is also the issue of what to do with the digital selves we leave behind: What happens to all those Facebook, Twitter and MySpace accounts, Flickr photos, blogs and online avatars after we die?

Swedish entrepreneurs Lisa Granberg and Elin Tybring asked themselves this question and were disturbed by the answer they arrived at. "We realised that individuals had no control over their digital identities after death," says Granberg, adding that family members wanting to wind down a loved one's online life often find themselves locked out of accounts. "We want people to be able to take control of their lives online, even after they die."

In October 2009, the women launched MyWebWill.com, a subscription service designed to give users the power to control