

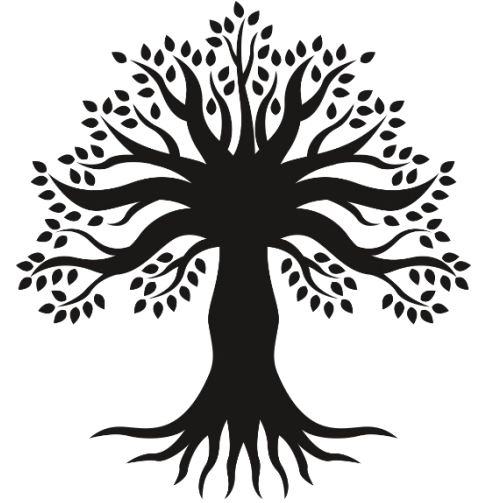
Proposal to Establish a Wishing Tree at the Ridgeway Pond

Submitted by: Theresa Berrie, co-founder of the Ridgeway Nature & Garden Club, 2/7/2023

What is a Wishing Tree?

Wishing Trees are special places:

- where people spend some time in Nature meditating, praying, or just being in stillness, to reconnect with whatever is important to them.
- Then they leave behind a wish, anonymous or not, for themselves, a loved one, or the world, usually written on paper or on a ribbon, that they hang from or near a tree.
- People find it comforting and hopeful to visit Wishing Trees. In many cultures trees are symbols of life, hope, and resilience, because trees can live for a very long time, and because they are rooted in the ground, yet reach for the sky.
- Wishing Trees are found in many countries, including the US, the British Isles, and Japan.



Other Wishing Trees:

My exposure to other Wishing Trees has led to my interest in establishing one here in Ridgeway:

1. I saw an article in Madison Magazine about a **Wishing Tree on the Military Ridge Bike Trail** near Riley, WI. The woman who established it based it on a wishing tree she saw in Portland, Oregon, about which she said: *"It's just beautiful & I was so inspired by it. It just felt like a small, simple thing with a powerful effect."* (See the article from Madison Magazine that follows this proposal.)
2. I have visited an indoor wishing tree, created out of a tree-shaped metal sculpture, on which people tie colorful ribbons, at **Kinstone**, which is located north of LaCrosse, WI. Kinstone is a magical place open to the public with outdoor stone sculptures and restored native prairies.
3. In the **British Isles** they often have trees or shrubs near sacred wells where people leave ribbons with their wishes. I visited one such site in Ireland and was very touched by it, and also found it to be calming, beautiful, and inspiring.

My proposal:

I have much enjoyed working with the Ridgeway Garden Club to create gardens along Main St. and a park around the pond. It's my hope that a Wishing Tree would further enhance the natural public area we're creating at the pond and encourage more people to visit and enjoy the space. I propose to:

- **Choose a tree** in the western line of trees at the Ridgeway Pond and **create a small seating area** around it.
- **Install a mailbox**, which will be a waterproof way to leave ribbons for people to use, markers for them to write wishes on the ribbons, and information about how to use the ribbons.
- **Provide a grapevine wreath near the tree on which people can hang the ribbons** (I prefer to use ribbons rather than paper because ribbons withstand rain and storms and don't normally become detached, even years later, so don't end up becoming litter).
- Choose a tree that is outside the area currently being mowed, so it **won't interfere with mowing**.
- This **would not damage any trees**, and there would be **no cost to the village**.
- **I would maintain the area going forward** and keep the mailbox stocked with ribbons. I will install more grapevine wreaths as needed, and respectfully dispose of any that need to be removed.

Questions?

Contact Theresa Berrie, theresab223@gmail.com, 608-425-0214

Thank you for considering my proposal!

“It’s our secrets, you know, kind of waving in the wind. I think it’s profound,” says Marca Andriesse, a local yoga instructor and real estate agent, who keeps at the base of the tree a watertight plastic box stocked with blank cards and markers.

Andriesse first brought the idea as an art project to the Mount Horeb Middle Schoolers Adventure Club she organizes. More than a year earlier she visited [a wishing tree in Portland](#) and was moved by the countless uplifting messages hung on it.

“It’s just beautiful and I was so inspired by it,” she recalls. “It just felt like a small, simple thing with a powerful effect.”

Then this summer — after having to close her brick-and-mortar yoga studio in Mount Horeb because of the coronavirus and seeing so many young people unable to get together — she says the Portland wishing tree came to mind again.

“I just felt like this project would give them a little hope. And also a sense of community because everybody is so isolated,” she says.

People of all ages and multiple ethnicities — some wishes are written in languages other than English — have embraced the project by reading the cards already there before adding their own.

“The other day I saw an older couple reading all the tags. I think it’s ageless, honestly,” Andriesse says. “The kids were super into it and now I’m seeing adults really into it.”

Joel Patenaude is associate editor at Madison Magazine.