

Friends of the White River County Park 2025 Projects

After a slowdown in activity during the covid years, Friends of the White River County Park have been able to regroup and once again take a more active role in our partnership with the county. During 2025, the group completed 3 major projects, several other individual projects, volunteered over 300 man hours, and will hold a total of 3 events.

The following slides will highlight some of the activities beginning in early spring with the purchase of 3 octagon benches. That was followed by an additional purchase of 5 sitting stones placed near the White River. The group also maintains the Rock Garden above the first pavilion by weeding, watering, mulching and adding additional plants each year. The old milkhouse has been repurposed and now provides an attractive cover for a watering tank by the rock garden.

In September, a major landscape project was undertaken to add erosion barriers and native plants in front of the iconic barn. After nearly 2 months, 111 new plants were added, rock barriers were in place, and wing dams were constructed to channel water away from the barn in the directions of plants.

Finally, both bridges over the White River were cleared of leaves, and donated railings are being added to the Nancy Russell trailhead for safety.

The Friends had a busy and enjoyable year working with staff at the park and working with the Geneva Lakes Conservancy.

Don Root (President) Frank Ward (Vice President) and Steve Messick (park staff) doing an annual inspection of the park. Our first project of 2025 was to purchase three octagon tables (like the one shown here). The tables have been placed on hilltops along park trails to create a picnic/rest area for hikers.





Our second project in the spring of 2025:

5 sitting stones were purchased and placed along the Nancy Russell trail near the White River. It was great to see this family using the area for family portraits.

*Stones were graciously delivered by Dunn Lumber of Lake Geneva.

Friends of White River County Park Native Plant Project for the Barn



For the past 2 years, members of the Friends group have discussed possible plantings to spruce up the milkhouse area by the barn.

In discussions between the Friends Liaison Committee and Park Superintendents, it was discovered that the county has also been considering possible beautification as well as solutions for the erosion that occurs on the slope.

Barn Plantings

After further discussion, in May of 2025, the Friends Group agreed to provide Native Plants for the front of the barn from the silo to the milkhouse. The county agreed to provide layout, stone edging, and fill dirt. Setup was completed in early September and planting was begun. The following volunteers contributed plants, labor, tools and enthusiasm:

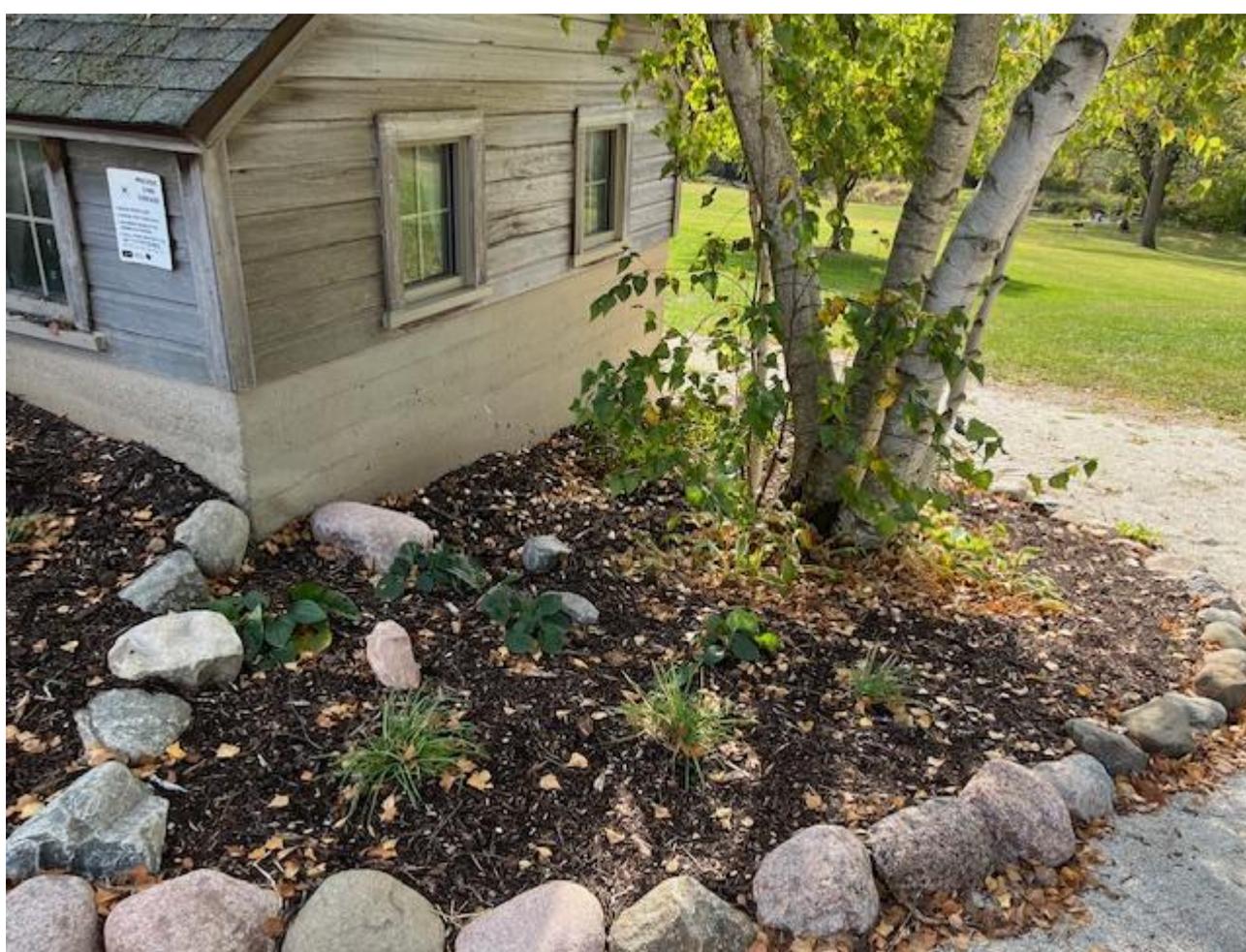
Sonya Dailey, Don Root, Kathy Ackerman, Lori Adams, Janice Bain, Don Howell, Dave Dorgan, and Frank Ward.

This third project was completed on October 14. After 60 hours and over 6 weeks, volunteers planted and mulched a total of 111 Native plants.



In early September, 2025, stones and fill dirt were placed by county staff. Several stones were strategically placed in 10 areas where barn runoff is most severe.

Plants with larger root systems were chosen to mitigate erosion and provide an example of species native to the area.



Beginning at the milkhouse, black eyed susan and nodding white onion were added to the already existing blue flag iris and small group of hosta surrounding a river birch tree. All plants were placed in a soil mix that consisted of top soil and miracle grow combined 50/50.



At the milkhouse, switchgrass and giant Indian plantain were positioned in an area receiving the most runoff from the barn roof. This area also includes black eyed susan, cone flower, purple prairie astor, giant hyssop, grey headed coneflower, penstemon, and spiderwort.



The antique pump is surrounded by brown eyed susans that will also need to absorb additional water from the roof. In time, they may provide a solid barrier. Stones should help here, to slow down the runoff.



A deluge of rain water will be met by additional switch grass, and giant Indian plantain above the old pump. Tall purple prairie astor, grey headed coneflower, purple coneflower, black eyed susans, penstemon, spiderwort and wild onion continue the pattern.



To the right of the barn door, a giant green headed coneflower lines the driveway, followed by more grey headed coneflower, purple coneflower, spiderwort, penstemon, black eyed susans and wild white onion completing the border. Wing dams channel water away from the barn and to the plants.



To the left of the barn and driveway, 2 stone steps were created and then filled with oxeye sunflower.



The transition from barn to silo has a serviceberry bush surrounded by wild geranium ground cover and wild onion continuing the uniform border. An area to the left of the tree was reserved for a possible feature to be added in the future.



Erosion around the silo area has also been an issue. Switchgrass, stone ledges, and a change in pitch should help move water to additional coneflower and black eyed susans instead of rushing down the slope.



Additional water barriers with switchgrass and bush sunflower are rounding out the silo.



This high erosion area has 2 additional switchgrass with stone barriers.



And finally, Mist flower roots grow into a web that may be able to withstand runoff in this last area. A redbud tree is the final addition.



A month after planting began, mulch is in place, plants are watered as fall is upon us.

Submitted by Sonya Dailey
sonyadailey23@gmail.com

Native Plant Summary

Switchgrass 13

Giant Indian Plantain 6

Green Headed Coneflower 1

Grey Headed Coneflower 5

Purple Coneflower 8

Wild White Onion Border 16

Tall Purple Prairie Aster 4

Giant Hyssop 2

Spiderwort 5

Bush Sunflower 3

Penstemon 3

Brown Eyed Susan 10

Black Eyed Susans 12

Wild Geranium 13

Mist Flower 8

Redbud Tree 1

June Serviceberry 1 (Total 111)

*Submitted by Sonya Dailey sonyadailey23@gmail.com (Garden Chair) October 2025

The Rock Garden

In addition to the new barn plantings, Friends of the White River County Park have also maintained the rock garden for a number of years.



Also seen in this photo is the repurposed milkhouse structure covering a water tank near the garden. Carpentry by Don Root.

Although a number of non native plants are found in the rock garden, the Friends group donated several native species in 2025. This bloodroot, shown below, will be one of the first to bloom in April. This and many other Wisconsin wildflowers are spread by an interesting process called “myrmecochory”. In this process, blossoms are carried by ants to their nests where the flower is eaten. Seeds from the flowers are dropped and scattered along the way. *Native plant donations by Sonya Dailey





Yellow Bellwort is
another new
addition.

Photo by Wikipedia



Wild Geranium should also do well in the rock garden along the back border. Early hummingbirds and native bees will no doubt find this a welcome addition.

Dutchman's Breeches are another of Wisconsin's early wildflowers.

When turned upside down, the tiny blossom of this woodland plant resembles a pair of baggy pants worn by dutchmen.



Another addition,
toothwort, is also a native
ephemeral plant that
requires an ant species to
disperse its seeds in early
spring.



This native Wild Ginger plant is a favorite of many younger children because it is “shy” just like them. This plant hides its beautiful red blossom under leaves next to the ground.

Careful observers may find this gem in several places of the rock garden in early spring.

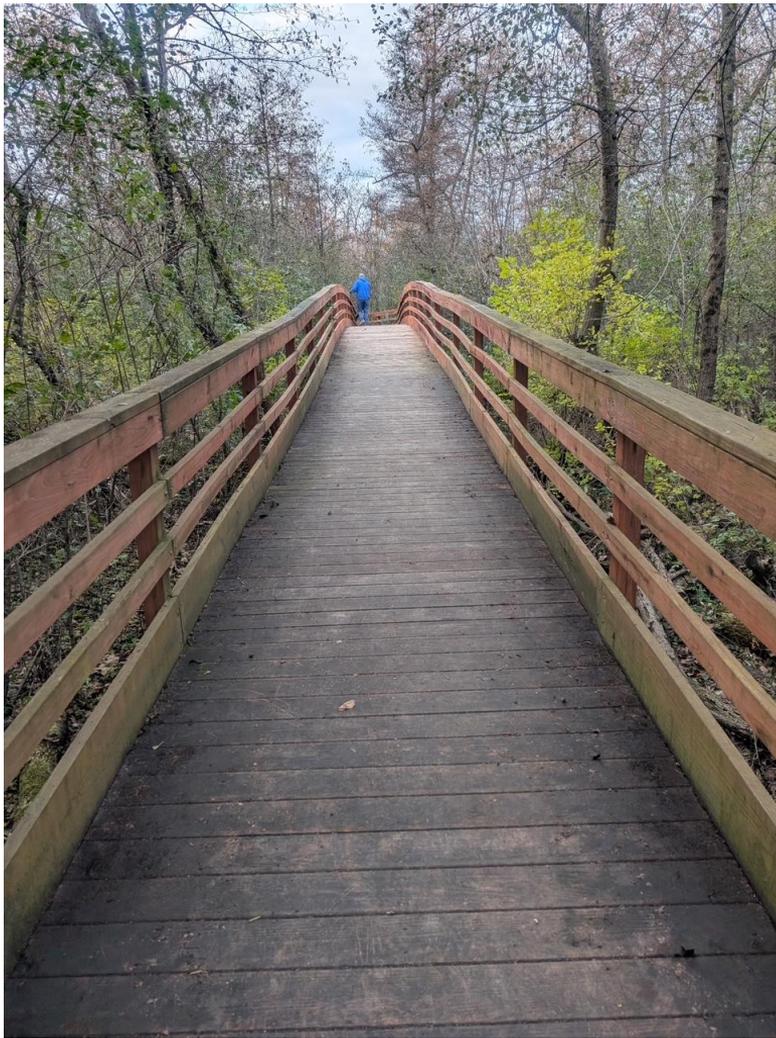


Solomon Seal will be the tallest addition. Bell flowers along the stem will furnish nectar for many weeks.



Jack in the Pulpit have been named for its interesting blossom that resembles a preacher standing in a pulpit. In fall, a bright red berry will be produced. Many flowers, native and non native alike, have seeds, stems or berries that may be toxic if eaten. This is one that should be admired from a distance.





An additional Fall Project:

Bridges over the White River were recently cleared of leaves by members Don Root and Frank Ward.



Final clean up before
the snow....

Our Winter Solstice Celebration will be Dec 20
This is a scene taken from last years event.





Lighted trails, guided hikes, refreshments and music were all part of the evening in the park.

Officers and Board Members 2025

President Don Root

Vice President Seth Tost/Frank Ward

Secretary Suzette Burmeister/Jennifer Weigel

Treasurer Mary Jo Fesenmaier

Sonya Dailey Garden Chair/Liaison/Membership

Don Howell Hike Chair

Keith Feeney Media

Katie Russell Media

Judy Anderson History

Wendy Chatterton

Lisa Lynn

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