

Yahara River Parkway Invasive Art

*Proposal by
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Summary

There are several invasive species along the Yahara River Parkway, and the City of Madison is planning to remove them. After removal, the cut organic materials are typically hauled off site for disposal. As an alternative, I am proposing to keep the material on site by using it as the raw material for a sculpture that would degrade into the soil.

Motivation and Philosophy

Currently, our public parks contain several invasive species, which were introduced to this area by human activity. As they grow, these invasive species take up nutrients from the soil and create organic material from the carbon in the air. Keeping the cut invasive species on site allows the natural cycle of decomposition to build and replenish the soil, contributing to the longer-term sustainability of the park.

Through this project, I hope to promote discussions around the issues of sustainability and to explore ways in which we can work with the natural systems in the urban environment to improve the health of those natural systems.

Specific Proposal

The installation would be east of the Yahara River, just south of Johnson St.

This area contains several black locust trees and grape vine, which would be used as the raw material for the installation. The installation would start by cutting the locust into long, linear pieces and then stacking them on the ground to form a semi-circle around the large cottonwood tree (yellow line in the image below). The grape vine would be wrapped around these pieces to help them together and also provide additional visual interest.



The image to the left shows a rough sense of scale and placement.

The black locust trees are marked with red circles.



Concept sketch of finished sculpture. Since it would be made with all of the material on site, the exact dimensions and look will differ from what is drawn.



Details:

- Because of existing city contracts and licensing issues around application of herbicide, a licensed contractor will do the actual removal of the invasive plants. This individual or organization would do the cutting and would leave the material on site.
- After this removal, I would lead a volunteer effort to process and arrange the material into the final installation. The volunteers would only use hand tools such as pruners or handsaws to process the material.
- The sculpture would be placed directly on the ground with no excavation or digging.
- The sculpture would remain in place for about a year, at which point, it is likely that it would be degraded.
- If there are problems or complaints with the sculpture, I will take responsibility for dismantling it and cleaning up the site.
- The placement is off of any mown grass areas and would not require any maintenance from the city.

The image below shows some grape vine that I arranged as a simple material prototype.



Works by Adam Briska:



Originally built for a personal project, I recently donated these wheels to the Madison Children's Museum.



Inspiration Board

Images below are the work of Andy Goldsworthy, Brenda Baker, and Roy Staab, respectively. The piece by Brenda Baker used local invasive species as raw material.

