

Mepkin Abbey Garden Volunteer Newsletter

September 2014



Native Hibiscus along the Upper Pond at Luce Garden

The weather has been a scorcher this past month, so Volunteers came earlier, and left about 10:30 or so. Watering is so necessary and Ursula has been my hero in keeping at it. Where things were simply burned up, we have planted some fill-in plants, and we will have to keep them moist for a month or two.

The theme this month was “clean up and clean out”. The Volunteers have tackled some long overdue cleanup at the Greenhouses/Mushroom Houses, at the rear of St. Benedict and the Orchard, at the steep hill behind the kitchen as well continuing the work at the Old Dorm/Bicycle Shop. Nick and Erwin were gone for three weeks, so we are back to tackle the river side of the Old Dorm now as well as finish up the other cleanup projects.



Greenhouse area before (Small GH to right of other GHs)

Note they had already removed about 15 sheets of muddy plastic full of fire ants, various wood debris, extra hoses, and assorted concrete block when this photo was taken. We have followed up by spraying and still have some trash filled areas to clean up.



Greenhouse area after



Greenhouse area after

Garden Updates

Store/Arbor:

We continue to feature The Store's new look. Check out the photo below. Do yourself a favor and visit The Store and those who manage it!



New shelving for clothing items

The Sacred Heart Grotto:

Ursula and Elaine renovated the Sacred Heart Grotto and it is full of red flowers again.



Sacred Heart Grotto

The Cloister:



Mums added for color along with other mixed natives

The basil in the raised vegetable beds has been outstanding this year. As is our annual custom, we have made Pesto for the Brothers to enjoy.



Basil in raised beds

We have also added color to areas that are bloomed out on the Walk to the Church.



New Dianthus added

The Orchard:

Howard's Report

Our garden/orchard work is turning into a collaborative work. We have gotten cardboard from the mushroom operation that is sure to slow down the weeds. The

board is multiple layers thick having been used to ship shitake mushroom logs to the abbey. We have been using that against the back fence and topping it with ground tree debris from Santee Cooper. This we hope will withstand gator traffic and last a long time.



Progress in the Orchard

George donated a couple of Chinese Chestnut trees that we plan to plant outside the fence. They grow to be quite large trees and would take a great deal of garden and also have a big shade footprint. The nuts are comparable to the American Chestnut and the trees very attractive if we can protect them from deer and mowing until they get some size.

We have at least one resident rabbit but as there is not much for it to eat that it couldn't find elsewhere we haven't gotten too excited. As we remove the weeds and continue our mulching the critter may leave of its own accord.

Luce Garden:

The Luce crew not only added new ferns to the room where the large Live Oak is the feature, but also moved, divided and evened out the ferns. It looks very nice now.



New ferns in Luce Garden

Columbarium:

The Columbarium is maturing nicely. Although we have lost a large Popular Tree, the other beds have filled in nicely.



Whirling butterflies

Retreat Center:

We continue to have positive comments from the Retreatants concerning how much the beautiful gardens mean to their visit. Peter has cleared out a view at the back of the Retreat Center so the Retreatants can enjoy seeing the Upper Pond at Luce

Garden.



View of the Upper Pond at Luce Garden

Odds and Ends:

As promised, here is the photo of our newest Volunteer, Nate Burriss. At the greenhouse and barn areas, he tackled the large tree debris, cutting it up and hauling it off to the burn pile. Thank you, Nate, for aiding us in our cleanup.



Nate

Special thanks also to Richard A and Bob for covering the mulch pile so it is much easier to use. It is heavy and staining when when wet and this cover is appreciated by all who need mulch.



Bob and Richard

Our thanks also to Jamie and Dennis for constructing another brick platform for the bench behind the Church where the Brothers like to sit and view the Cooper River. Now they can avoid the fire ants and bugs crawling on their feet!



Platform under bench for Brothers at Bluff

Mystery Photo:



Purple Hot Peppers for Brother Stephen

While we mention Brother Stephen, we would like to thank him for assisting us in watering the beds where our longtime Volunteer, Carl, worked. Carl has moved into Charleston and can no longer help us. We so appreciate Brother Stephen jumping in

to smooth over our transition!

We are starting a new grounds program this month, which includes a schedule for mowing and who is responsible for which areas to mow. There have been times when areas not to be mowed were mowed (the grass fields) and other times some communication problems on who was taking care of what and how often. Coastal Lawn Service, who already takes care of the Cloister, Luce, the Columbarium and the Retreat Center are expanding their service to us. The Volunteers are taking on areas also. The farm fields will continue to be taken care of by the Monastery personnel. Look for the overall appearance to improve.

HELP NEEDED:



The Labyrinth is in need of renovating. The grasses have taken over and need to be removed, so that the other natives can expand. There were wildflower/native plant Volunteers when this project was done, and I hope some of them can give us a day a week or even a day a month. You do not have to be a wildflower/native plant expert. A strong back and love seeing things put in order is more important. We will begin this renovation this Fall when it is cooler if we can get the manpower to do this. Please contact Father Gueric at guerricheckel@gmail.com or me at roddydh@gmail.com . Many thanks!

My thanks to Howard for The Orchard Garden Report and my thanks to Langhorne for editing. I want to correct the identity of the small boy in the photo last month. He is not Rainy's grandson, but the nephew of her daughter in law. Sorry about that! Peace, dottie

