

Mepkin Abbey Garden Volunteer Newsletter

December 2014

November brought preparations for the Creche Festival, which has been most successful. The few photos I can share do not do it justice, but—believe me—lots of volunteer hours and special touches go into making this a Christmas tradition for many families in the Low Country.

For those of us working in the gardens, it all starts to get interesting when first we see various golf carts piled to the brim with boxes. All of a sudden a forest of evergreen cut trees appear in the Cloister. Then, Jamie and her crew arrive for a week and work to put together the huge wreath for the Library. This year, Father Jonas designed the star wreath, and somehow, Dennis and Jamie were able to fabricate the infrastructure to make it a reality! What you are seeing in the photo below is a star which uses magnolia leaves affixed to a frame; the back (brown) of the magnolia leaves affixed on one part, and the front (green) of the leaves on the other. The wreath itself is moss gathered from our grounds.



Jamie's Team



Hoisting the Wreath



Close up of the Wreath in place

The next surprise was opening a box with Father Guerric of new pieces to a large Creche we already had. Lo! And behold! Look at our new “Magi” bringing gifts!....



L to R in back: Fr Joe with bread, Fr. Guerric with a Sunflower and Brother Anthony Maria with a mushroom

Before the Creche Exhibit opened I walked through and took some random shots:



Here is the permanent outdoor Creche with added Magi and Shepherd this year



Breezeway Creche



The Entry to the Exhibit



Note the beautiful use of materials



Along the Wall

Garden Updates

Store/Arbor:

The Store has been busy for over a month. First, selling the fruitcakes, and then the ornaments, and then, the thousands of visitors arrived.

St. Clare Walk:

As St. Clare beds fill in, we find certain plants we have put in spreading and making a nice show. We have tried to have a few things that bloom at this time of year for the Creche Festival but Mother Nature pulled a three day frost on us and we lost the

blooms.



St. Clare-without yellow blooms

The Cloister:

The Cloister continued to have the Russian Sage, Roses, Blanket Flowers, Mums and Vinca until we had a very cold snap and they moved on. We have kept things cut back that fade, and we look forward to Spring with the Daylilies pushing up to bloom this summer.

George has been filling the raised vegetable beds with various greens and lettuces for winter. It is quite a lovely sight.



Raised beds with lettuces and various greens

The Orchard

The orchard crew, Norm and myself at the moment (George is doing raised bed gardening behind the senior Wing), are continuing to work on covering the ground inside the “orchard” with cardboard and mulch. So far so good, but, at the rate Norm and I are going it will be some time before the ground is covered. Green Carolina did a super job of removing weeds and incorporating pre-emergent herbicide. The herbicide will get a good test!

I don't know that I will hold up on the mulch relocation and need to develop a less labor intensive method. There's lots of ground to cover!!

Howard



A day of Green Carolina and we are ready for Winter

Luce Garden:

Luce continues to be the showplace it was meant to be. The crew down there continually check that everything is A-One. I believe Loutrel Briggs (landscape designer of the Luce) would love what they have accomplished!



Luce Garden in Winter—calm and serene

The other Luce news is that we have contracted for a handrail on both sides of the main steps and it will be installed by the New Year

Columbarium:

The handrail on the steps to the bridge across the ravine is not yet installed, but the artist is working on it. As the cold weather hit, we changed out the blue flower pots for Running Junipers and have placed a large fresh wreath for the Christmas Season to replace the clematis pots, which have matured.



Juniper pots



Wreath

Mystery Photo:



This is the Secular Cemetery near the Farm. I want to commend Bob, Nick and Richard A for filling in two sunken graves that are being prepared to receive Mundo Grass soon. They have done a wonderful job keeping this area in a condition of respect. Thank you!

Often, we do not realize what effort it takes to simply change out a bed. To the right of the Church across from the 12 man Cottage, the bed was worse for wear. We were given 7 Hawthorn shrubs and so decided one Saturday to “step up” this area. Richard B and Nate were the labor---I was the instructor of how I wanted it (they humored me). Here it is in pictures:



Bed in progress of being prepared



Debris from bed



New Hawthorns given to us



New bed

Many thanks to Nate and Richard B for taking their Saturday to make this happen.

Many thanks to Howard for The Orchard Garden Report, Brother Anthony Maria, and Julie for photographs, and to Langhorne for editing. As we enter into Advent, I want to share an article by Joan Chittester :

A Place Called Home

"In each of us there is a place where we go in the middle of chaos to escape from the fray. It is that "home" place, that hiding place, that soft place where no memories of it

come with ragged edges and no thought of it is tinged with fear. It's an empty beach, perhaps. Or a hidden place on the bluff above town where we remember being able to see everything while no one could see us.

It's that natural place within us where the roar of the water or the silence of the mountains or the warmth of the desert or the moss of the swamp soothes our souls and makes us feel human again, at one with the universe again, in control again.

Whatever it is, wherever it is, it calms us and makes us new."

For me, that is Mepkin and all it entails—its Monks, its Volunteers, its place. Merry Christmas to each of you, dottie

