

Mepkin Abbey Garden Volunteer Newsletter

February 2015



Room One, Luce Garden (Craig Clark)

January was wet and cold. There were many days we were unable to work, and the debris from the wind and rain is still keeping us on our toes. You cannot imagine what it is like to try to blow wet leaves off the walks. Despite all, our great Volunteers persevered and Mepkin was made ready for our many guests.

Brother Robert, famous for his many years on the Tractor, waving with his cap and goggles, went home on Saturday, January 31st. We will miss his every winning smile and always being willing to help in any way.



Tractor in the Cloister with his hat and goggles



Brother Joseph with Brother Robert

Garden Updates

Store:

Both Father Joe, and Angel were fortunate to be able to attend the Gift Mart in Atlanta. They stayed at the Monastery of The Holy Spirit in Conyers with the Trappists, and we look forward to seeing the many new items from their trip. There is a new look at the Store—beautiful new cabinets! Go in and shop.



New cabinets in Store

St. Clare/Walk to the Church:

Things are pretty quiet in St. Clare and the Walk to the Church this time of year. Everything looks like it is having a rest, as the Volunteers continue with the constant winter maintenance and pruning.

Cloister:

With most plants sleeping, the outstanding feature in the Cloister now is the raised vegetable beds that George has kept stocked. He starts his special seeds in the Greenhouse, and as the mature plants are used in the kitchen, he transplants the seedlings to replace them. A wonderful surprise was to find one of the beds full of violas, or small pansies, providing purple and yellow to the green of the lettuces/greens.



Mature plants ready for the kitchen



Transplants from the greenhouse



Violas in raised beds

The Orchard:

The project continues as we add cardboard from the mushroom operation and cover it with mulch.. We are trying to get ahead of the weeds. Thanks to Dottie and Green Carolina we have a fighting chance. We diverted a couple of boxes to provide cover for the citrus trees and so far (knock on wood) it appears to be working. I also protected the grafts with foam just to be safe.

Did some pruning of the persimmon trees near the old mushroom barns.

We had a very productive year in the Orchard, and with luck we may again. The critters are always a potential threat but so far so good.

George bought us a couple of Chinese Chestnuts that we hope to plant near the greenhouses. They produce very nice fruit that can be used the same way our domestic, though virtually exterminated, chesnuts were used.

Howard

Columbarium:

Exciting news from the Columbarium! The new step railings have been installed. They are of stainless steel. They are much in keeping with the natural feel of the area. Many thanks to Susan Conant, Landscape Architect, for designing and seeing this project through.



Steps going down



Middle Section of steps



Long range View of steps

Luce Garden:

We have two important projects under way at Luce.

The Luce crew are excavating the old brick steps that lead down to the water, and they are installing a drainage system for the area where the smaller steps lead to Our Lady's Room.

The excavating of the steps was greatly helped by a Boy Scout Service Day at Mepkin. When Craig visited them, he told them about the steps project. With Craig's usual charm—they committed to come to Mepkin one Saturday to help. At the end of the day, he gave them a tour of the Monastery and took them to noon services in the Church. Craig and his group exemplify Volunteers who go the extra mile. The boys were enthusiastic and for many, it was both their first exposure to a Monastery and its' life---plus, it was a great example of what a Volunteer is.



Boy Scouts helping with the steps project



Steps as they are today

The next "step" will be to get a brick mason to restore these steps to a useable condition.

The other project about drainage, concerned a problem Luce Garden has had for years. A few years ago, when we had a restoration brick mason here to repair various areas, a landing was constructed at the top of the small stairs to divert the water. We hoped this would take care of the problem it. It did not. We continued to have runoff that was destructive in its runoff. The Luce crew, after making one attempt that did not work, recently rolled up their sleeves and put in a very professional drainage ditch. The photo below is the work in progress. Currently if you go down to the area, you do not even know the ditch is there, as they have both groomed the area and replaced the mulch. Way to go, guys!



Drainage project in progress

The Old Dorm:

As if excavating one group of steps was not enough, the Volunteers got busy again and (as I have pictured before) dug up the steps at the Old Dorm. That is not the end of the story! There suddenly appeared an old brick walk dug up by mystery Monks! When I ask about it, they just smile. Here is the new look at the lower part of the river side of the Old Dorm.



Mystery excavation of brick walkway from Dorm to steps

The next step here is the same as at Luce Garden (to have the walk and steps repaired to useable condition).

Odds and Ends:

I know I am always bragging about our Volunteers. They never fail to amaze Ursula and me. I was gone for six weeks in Tennessee and when I returned the following is typical of what I found.

The “before” photos were to remind me that I had to get this area cleaned out when I returned. When I returned, I took these “after” photos ----need I say more? Much appreciation to Roy, who saw this and took it on!



Old Dorm bed and steps "before"



Old Dorm steps and bed "after"

Also, while I was gone, Bob emailed me that there was a tree down in the Luce Upper Pond. He did not seem too excited, so I told him I would look at it the

following week when I returned. Here is what I found:



Are you believing this? They were good not to send a photo! No worry, the arborist is coming this week, and will remove it and take the wood to Brother Joseph to be split to fire the boiler for heat. Recycle, recycle!

We have another new Volunteer! George Clark, a doctor from near Summerville, has joined us. He worked with me last week cleaning up the GH and even hosed it down. He is a keeper, for sure!



George

Many thanks to Howard for The Orchard Garden Report, Craig for the photos of the Scouts and the beautiful photo of Room One in Luce Garden and to Langhorne for editing.

It is a very exciting time to be at Mepkin Abbey. As you can see, there are several re-births going on in the grounds. This matches the bulbs, which are popping up, telling us Spring is not far away. In the meantime, Lent will be beginning with Ash Wednesday, on February 18th. Easter is early this year, so we will be getting the grounds and ourselves ready for remembering the awe of the Death and the joy of the Resurrection of our Lord. Peace, dottie