

Mepkin Abbey Garden Volunteer Newsletter

March 2015

The photos below give you some idea of the conditions we were working with in February!



The Farm Road



The "Lake" at the Laundry

What a month! Rain, cold, rain, cold---we lost two weeks just because of the rain and the cold. Despite all, people came and kept the debris picked up and even cleared some areas! Most of the pictures this month show Mepkin Abbey "sleeping". There is even a beauty in the Monastery at rest now in the recycling of life. One of the good things is that the weather has given us some time planning for the future. There are lots of exciting projects on the boards which you will see as the year goes on.

We were lucky to have two Mormon young ladies who came and helped us in their free time for over a month. They cleaned up Abraham's corner and the Crossroads, as well as the area by the Store. They were in this area doing community service for their Church, and we love having them. One will leave this week and another will be coming with our remaining Sister. Thank you, Sister Sue and Sister Mary (our names for them!).



Garden Updates

St. Clare/Walk to the Church:

Grooming and cutting back continue in St. Clare. Several bulbs are up and several pots have been replaced.



New pots

We continue to fill pots in winter with plants we can recycle and add to our beds. These are Dwarf Gardenias which will be added to the Gardenia bed which was hit hard by the ice storm last year.

Cloister:

We continue to move like-plants together from various areas. Richard A, our “go to it” man, removed the Castor Bean Plants from St. Clare to add them to the ones to the left of the Church. Hopefully, this will give us more a dramatic “show” each year as they bloom and seed.

Nick cut the Sweet Grass on the hill in the Cloister and, as usual, did a great job.



Sweet Grass hill at Cloister

The Orchard:

The orchard mulching project is going forward with reduced manpower. The weather in the last month has been especially wet on Tuesdays so some of us have stayed home. We also need to burn the fields but will probably need a week of dry weather to be able to get a good fire going.

The blueberries look promising and although the plants are still on the small side they look healthy and should produce some fruit. The blackberries have been tamed a bit with plants that rooted from branch tips transplanted under the arbor. We have put some compost on all the fruit and have great expectations for either a bit of fruit or growth that will produce in the future. The raspberries are an unknown commodity as they are not normally grown this far south. We did get a variety recommended for our area so time will tell.

We just need some warm DRY weather and of course rain when we need it. Pity the poor farmers!

Howard



Orchard as seen through the Gate

Columbarium:

The Columbarium continues to be a huge success. Here are some photos of the area “at rest” in February.



The Surrounding Woodland



The Sweet Grass clipped for Winter



Luce Garden:

The most exciting news at Luce is that the new drainage system is working! The next improvement to come will be the railings for the smaller steps down to Our Lady's Room, plus railings for the steps down from the Oak Room to the Lower Pond. The same Vendor, Lee Walters, is working on these second steps. We are so pleased with his work on the main steps. The Luce Crew continues to eliminate vines, work on edges, and keep up with the regular maintenance that keeps Luce looking like the showplace they have made it.

The Retreat Center: Inspiration Point



Meredith

Father Gueric has been begging us to find time to start working on the area to the left of the Retreat Center all the way to the bluff of the Cooper River. Peter had cleaned up the edges along the Luce Ponds and the bluff, but all the interior trees needed Yupon removal, raking, volunteer trees removed, and a general cleanup. Lo! And Behold! Meredith (of Meredith and Dan of Maine) arrived and took it on! Even named it! It will be an area for the Retreatant to spend time walking in this beautiful, private area that only the Retreatants will be using. To say this was a labor of love is to put it mildly and we are only about half-way through. Along with Meredith, our faithful Bob, Richard, and Tom have been hauling the debris and helping, with chain saws and lopers, in the areas that were too much.



Bob and Richard A on debris pickup



Bob and Tom clearing the bamboo that Peter had cut but been unable to clean up.

Here is a peek at what it looks like:



Inspiration Point

Odds and Ends:

More good Volunteer News:

The Luce Garden crew has a new member, who actually has been working for several months with them. He is Joe Sims who comes from Pinopolis. Welcome, Joe. You have been such a help to them in all they do!



Joe

I am also happy to report we also have another Volunteer coming on line. The rain has delayed his Orientation for two weeks! Look for him in the coming months!

Please remember that this is a time of Lent in preparation for Good Friday and Easter. I thought you would enjoy seeing one of Father Gueric's Lenten arrangements. He certainly catches the penitent spirit of the season.



Lenten arrangement in Church

Many thanks to Howard for The Orchard Garden Report, and to Langhorne for the Orchard photo and editing.

While at the Store “shopping” this past week, I came across this statement of the meaning of the Mepkin logo and I thought you would enjoy reading this:



“Jim Nally is the person who designed the logo. His name was Brother Benedict while he was with us in the community.

The logo presents us with the main entrance of the monastery-known as the breezeway-clearly seen in the peaked roof with rooflines on the left and right and the walkway opening through which one can see a branch of a live oak tree with Spanish moss hanging down. Below this, we find interspersed panels in alternating color representing the flowing water of the river. All these elements are drawing the eye to see in the vertical and horizontal lines (broken by the opening of the breezeway) the suggestion of a cross.

A monk who comes to the monastery invited by God to follow Christ who lived a fully human life but who shows us the way to God by prayer, teaching, service and his passion, death and resurrection. Those who visit the monastery come to share in our way of prayer, to reflect and to be renewed in a time apart in this peaceful and beautiful setting.”

Until next month, I wish you peace. dottie