

Mepkin Abbey Garden Volunteer Newsletter

April 2015



What a lovely liturgy we experienced, from Palm Sunday through Easter Day. The Palm Sunday procession started at the Retreat House with a short blessing of the palms, and then an uplifting chant led by Father Kevin as Cantor, with everyone joining in appropriately with the Schola. We then processed, singing, to outside the Church for another part of the service, until we entered the Church for Mass.



The bonfire at the beginning of The Vigil

The Vigil of Easter was so beautiful this year, with the Cantor and Schola outdoing themselves and adding so much to the experience. Many thanks to Father Paul for working with them and perfecting the organ accompaniment. Hats off to Father Gueric for the usual outstanding job on decorating the Church.

Preparation for the celebration for Easter starts for us with a gift from us to the Monks, by decorating the graves of the Monks who have entered Eternal Rest. Here is a photo of Volunteers preparing the glass pots with lovely white kalanchoe that Ursula found.



Margaret and Shane



Graves with flowers for Easter



The first sign of Spring at St. Benedict

March finally warmed up a bit. The rain spread out a little bit more, and with the warmer weather, everything seemed to pop open at once, and as usual, the visual feast was amazing. Throughout the Newsletter, I have placed various photos to share this beauty with you.

We remember Brother Michelangelo, who had only arrived at Mepkin on February 7th, was born into Eternal Life on February 28th. Brother Michelangelo had been a religious brother throughout his life and came to Mepkin to enter the journey to becoming a Trappist. He was received as a Postulant in articulo mortis and buried with his Brothers in the Cemetery outside the Church.



Brother Michelangelo

Sister Mary, one of the two Mormon young ladies who were once a week Volunteers, returned to her home. In her place, Sister Ruth joins us. What a help and cheerful spirit they bring to our group. Thank you, Sister Ruth, for joining us along with Sister Sue, who remains with us.



Sister Sue and Sister Ruth

Garden Updates

Store/St. Clare/Walk to the Church:

We have raked St. Clare and added new mulch for Easter. Every week has brought a new blooming surprise.



Lady Banks Rose blooming at Arbor



Lenten Rose in St. Clare

Cloister:

We have planted Blanket Flowers in front of the budded white Azaleas at the 10 man cottage. The various pots of Hawthorn are in bud and should bloom in a week or so. The highlight still continues to be the wonderful raised vegetable beds below that George tends to. We have shared several bags of greens with the kitchen, but the pansies are in riot!



Raised vegetable bed in Cloister

Entry to the Church:

After trying to grow the miniature ivy under each of the Japanese Maples at the Entry to the Church, I finally gave up and decided to remove the ivy and simplify the look. Thanks to Richard A, Ursula and Elaine, this was accomplished.



New look at the Entry to the Church (note we have also planted azaleas on each side of the porch)



Elaine and Ursula

The Orchard:

The Orchard Crew, with help from Bob and Richard, were finally able to do a controlled burn of the labyrinth. We waited until about 10 for the dew to evaporate, and thanks to a light breeze, we made relatively short work of it. Thanks to prep work of mowing around the memorial trees and live oaks, this was the most effective burn we have been able to do in this area.

The area was also mowed afterward, to give it a clean appearance, and should be green again in no time, hopefully minus some of the weed plants that came in during the past year.

We are almost through with our monstrous mulching job in the orchard. We need to go back to beginnings and remove some of the Florida Betony that has managed to thrive, but everything looks good for now.

Howard



Labyrinth after controlled burn



Firemen's Memorial after controlled burn

Columbarium:

Even the Columbarium has started waking up! The Clematis on the iron trellises are outdoing themselves, and the Sweet Grass is up, as well as the River Oats.



Clematis at Columbarium



Sweet Grass



River Oats

Luce Garden:

If you have not seen Luce Garden in the past week, you should drive out. It is simply magnificent with the pink azaleas in full bloom and the darker purple in bud. The White Camellias behind Our Lady are breath-taking. Once again, all is a riot of color and calm.



Pink Azaleas in Luce Garden



White Azaleas in Room One



White Camellias behind Our Lady



Tulip Magnolia blooming in Luce Garden

The Retreat Center:

The Retreat Center continues with Retreats, directed and undirected. It has been a hive of activity. Here are photos of some groups having lunch outside at the Aging Seminar.



Father Guerric having lunch with Seminar participants.



Seminar participants enjoying lunch outside

Inspiration Point continues to be cleared and the transformation that has taken place is amazing. It's such an added joy to the Retreatants to be able to walk the grounds and to view Luce Garden from the Bluff, as well as to see the Cooper River.

Sacred Heart Grotto:

Brother Joe arrived for Holy Week and got right to work updating the Sacred Heart Grotto he created several years ago. Here you can see the result.



Brother Joe with Geraniums



Sacred Heart Grotto Update

Odds and Ends:

Here is our newest Volunteer, Shane Graham—about whom I spoke last month. Welcome, Shane!



Shane

Speaking of Volunteers, you have met Nate before. Nate comes on Saturdays once a month and cleans up debris. Here is his latest accomplishment.



Before photo. This is only one of about 6 piles he hauled to the burn pile.



After photo.

What would we do without people like Nate? He comes on his own, and presto! When I come the next week he has done a mountain of work! Thank you, Nate, for your loyalty to our program.

I was checking Luce Garden one day last week and I came upon a group of Artists doing “Plein Art” (painting outside). It was at the peak of the pink azalea bloom and they were thrilled to have found out about Mepkin. They had called the Store and asked Angel if they could do this. What a wonderful sight to see them in various places around the garden! This group invited me to share their lunch—it looked wonderful, but I had already eaten with the Volunteers “Under the Oak”.



Plein Art Artists in Luce Garden

Several months ago, Father Guericc and Susan Conant (Landscape Architect) spoke to me about some screening with shrubs and trees that we needed to do as a compliment to the new Signage Program. Thanks to Green Carolina and their crew who work with us usually once a month, we were lucky enough to solve two problems. We needed to move three large Holly trees from outside St. Gerard and had found where we wanted to move them, but there were electrical and water lines there. Susan was on site and quickly suggested we move them to the new bed being developed at the Crossroads where there is a sign that advises only people with appointments should go this way. Here is the resulting new look at the Crossroads near St. Bernard.



New bed at Crossroads with Holly trees

I also want to thank Greenhouse Bob for installing a new large fan in GH1. He continues to be such a help to us and we thank him for doing this.

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

Mepkin Abbey continues to be a very exciting place to be. Abbot Stan and the Brothers have been so supportive of our program, helping us with repairs and funding our projects. We receive so much in our time in "this special place". I end this month with a quote from St. Anthony when he was asked what he would do without his books. He replied, "My book, O Philosopher, is the nature of created things, and whenever I want to read the word of God, it is right in front of me". I am hoping each of you had a joyous Easter and rejoice in the promise of the Resurrection. dottie