

Mepkin Abbey Garden Volunteer Newsletter

August 2015



Native Hibiscus blooming in Luce Garden

The highlight of July was the Annual Volunteer and Staff Picnic. It was a grand occasion with over 150 people! Father Joe and Brother Dave did the cooking and I am still hearing about the delicious chicken and many varieties of vegetables and salads. It was a time of celebration for the more than 15,000 volunteer hours donated by volunteers to the Abbey. This year the 1000 hour plaque and Gold TShirt were awarded to Fran Taggart, Peter Wallace and Judith Kramer from last year and Bob Marshall for this year. The Picnic is the Brothers thank you each year, with the awarding of TShirts and award pins as a volunteer reaches so many hours of work. The various groups are comprised of Docents for tours of the Abbey, Library Volunteers to help Vivian with her work, Creche Volunteers for the highly successful Creche Festival, Maintenance Volunteers who help out with repairs and keeping things clean and Garden Volunteers who keep the grounds and gardens in good order. The Staff, as well, is honored for their work throughout the year. As you can see from the photos, a grand time was had by all.



Abbot Stan offering the opening prayer



The opening scripture being read



Lining up for the buffet lunch



Starting down the line



Father Kevin helping out the George family



The end of the line



Garden Groups



Docent Group with Staff



Luce Garden Group



Creche Festival Group



General Crowd



Jimmy (Mushroom Operation) and Abbot Stan



Vivian with the Library Group

In July we continued feeding, de-vining and pruning the azaleas and camellias. We have planted most of the Native Hibiscus bounty we produced, as well as planting a small cutting flower bed in the Orchard. The grooming and watering of the beds is a major task, but we did have some rain.

Garden Updates

The Store:

You must get by the Store. There are many new books as well as individual items for yourself or for gifts. The new cabinets and arrangements give the Store an entirely different look.





Cloister:

The Cloister volunteers have done a wonderful job of keeping everything groomed in the beds as well as taking care of the various colorful pots in the area. The Daylilies are about gone and they have cleaned up that bed so the Russian Sage can shine with its oncoming blooms.



The raised beds have produced wonderful basil ,hot peppers, tomatoes and Japanese eggplants with the basil being made into pesto for the freezer for the winter and the other products used in the kitchen.



This is the time of the year the Crepe Myrtles shine and they have bloomed beyond belief. What a beautiful sight for the Monks as they enter the Church.



Crepe Myrtles

The Orchard:

I am writing Howard's report this month as I regret to report his wife had a stroke recently. Please keep Mary Ann in your prayers.

The Orchard crew continues to come and keep things going. The figs turned out to be phenomenal this year and they are still ripening up! It has been a treat for the Brothers as well as some left for the Garden Volunteers on the Breakroom Table. The persimmons are producing now and soon we will have a delicious break treat eating them---as well as the kitchen will! Soon we will begin preparing for Fall and cleaning up what weeds have gotten ahead of us, along with mulching the flower bed. What a year!



Persimmons not yet ripe



Ripening Fig

Luce Garden:

At this time, the task in Luce is mostly maintaining. They have fed the azaleas, pruned the hydrangeas, de-vined and de-vined some more, trimmed the hedges and kept the debris picked up and the parking lot blown. As you can see below, the

cleared cove continues to fill in with aquatic plants. Peter is working from the top (Inspiration Point) clearing vistas for the Retreatants area on the bluff. If you remember, two years ago you could not even see the cove---or enjoy the view at the Overlook.



Cove at Luce Garden

What does it take? Look at one load of vines out of Luce. These men are really doing a fabulous job, so that our Visitors can enjoy the beauty that reflects God in this place.



Gators with vines to be hauled away

Columbarium:

While riding through the Columbarium last week to check on things, I stopped my Gator to simply take in the peace and serenity of the place. What has been created here is amazing. Enjoy.



Retreat Center:

A report from Guerric:



Cistercian Formation Directors from the US Region met at Mepkin Abbey from July 20 -27, 2015. Here some of them are gathered with Abbey expressing their gratitude to her for showing them around the grounds. They could not have been more complimentary on how glorious the grounds look and how welcome the felt to the place.

Labyrinth:

We continue with the refurbishing the Labyrinth. The edging has greatly helped the appearance of the paths and Green Carolina continues to remove the invasive grasses. The Labyrinth was developed as a native plant area, where various native plants could be seen. It will continue to have that “wild” look, as it was intended, but we hope to remove plants that “take over” and let the more desirable plants



Odds and Ends:

St. Anthony:

Just an update on how the landscaping at St. Anthony is coming along. The new plantings last Fall have taken and recently Richard did a wonderful job of mulching it all.



St. Anthony

Believe it or not, we have another Mormon "Sister" working with us now. She is Sister Teresa and the three come faithfully each week to help us.



Sister Teresa is in the middle

More good news is that we have another new volunteer who has moved here from my hometown, Knoxville, Tennessee. She is pictured here with a group last week. Her name is Kathy Mitchell.



The three Sisters, Kathy, Dottie and Ursula

You may notice that I have a knee to foot walking cast on now. Three weeks ago as I prepared to dress to pick up Ursula to drive to Chapel Hill for my great grandson's Baptism, I heard a pop—and a searing pain went from my foot up my leg. My right metatarsal on my left foot had failed and fractured due to all the metal on the other side of the foot (it was rebuilt 3 years ago). Needless to say I went back to TN to the same surgeon and she inserted a long screw to keep the bone together. Along with this, we have had one of our Volunteers have serious surgery and another diagnosed with a heart attack and treatment coming up. We are somewhat short on help and would love to have anyone help us, if only briefly. We work on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 or 9 until 11:30. Contact Volunteer Director Ursula Wells at uwells@homesc.com.

Many thanks to Father Guerric for his report, to Father Jonas for the wonderful photos of the Picnic (I was in TN for surgery), to Craig or Nelson for the Luce vines photo and for Langhorne (I found her this month!) for editing this issue. I leave you with an excerpt from Joan Chittister's *Becoming Fully Human*:

An appreciation of the beauty that is life:

"It's what we have when we have nothing that defines our relation to nature and the effect of nature on the soul. Then we begin to realize that we do not exist outside of nature or above nature or independent of nature; we are simply its most vulnerable part. What we learn from nature may make the whole difference in the way we go through life, and what we want from it, and what we consider important in it, and—most of all—what we are capable of learning by being alive."

Peace, dottie



Ursula's requested photo entitled "Pick up for Mrs. Roddy" (Ursula and Elaine)