

Mepkin Abbey Garden Volunteer Newsletter

September 2015



Native Red Hibiscus blooming in The Orchard

July brought intermittent rains which were welcome, but the winds unwelcome with the large problem of debris they brought. Our stalwart volunteers kept up with all of this and also with their mowing duties. We completed the Azalea and Camellia feeding program; we fed and pruned the Hydrangeas; we prepared the Daylilies for winter; and, we are scheduled to work on the vines this month.

Garden Updates

St. Clare:

A walk through St. Clare is serene, even now in the heat of the season. Kathy, one of our new volunteers, has taken this on as her project on Thursdays. Gail alternates on Tuesday, keeping all unsightly plant material pruned and groomed. The plant that Karen "saved" from being overwhelmed by other plants, returned to planting size in the Greenhouse, and was put at the back of the St. Clare circle. This is the plant that you saw earlier with wonderful blooms. We look forward to a show this next year.



Plants at the back of the St. Clare circle

Cloister:

-Our Cloister “girls” (Pam and Laurie) retired for the school year and we thank them again, for all their work during the summer.

-The Russian Sage is setting bloom and I expect will be full of butterflies this time next month.

-The mixed bed continues to be a challenge, but we regularly remove those native plants that overwhelm the Palmetto and Hawthorns that we planted to have a “winter” bed there.

-The renovation of the herb beds paid off and we are allowing them to bloom at this point.

-The raised vegetable beds have yielded their harvest and the large stand of Basil is blooming. We have finished making the pesto for the Brothers for the winter. Once again, George Neil is to be thanked for his work with the vegetables and all the bounty that was enjoyed.

-A sideline is the renovation of Brother Joseph’s bird-feeder that had seen its better days. Alan, our maintenance volunteer, asked to repaint it and fix what was broken. Here it is now. Thank you, Alan, for your continuing work at Mepkin.



Brother Joseph's Feeder renovated

Howard's Orchard Report:

Things have slowed down in the Orchard so Norm and I are focusing on Nut Grass control. Despite the cardboard and mulch the grass has come through aggressively. We are trying a new herbicide labeled for Nut Grass hoping that if we can once get it under control it will be smooth sailing.

According to the label we should not expect fast results. We are, of course, limited to using the herbicide in areas away from the brambles and blueberries so we are hand pulling plenty of ground. The Satsuma Oranges look very good so we have high hopes for fruit next year.

We have tried to protect the Persimmon trees that border the field behind the barn. The bush hog is tough on trees so we hope by giving them a mulch buffer we can save them from additional damage. There is a lot of fruit on the trees, so much that we were worried about broken branches. George helped us find some Popcorn tree saplings we could convert into props. They look good so far.

Howard

Luce Garden:

The Luce crew continues to maintain the Luce Garden and have had quite a challenge with the debris from wind. Here is Russ cutting up a large limb that fell. There is nothing "small" at Mepkin.



Russ cutting up large fallen limb

Also - Peter continues clearing across the ponds from up top the Bluff at Inspiration Point. It is a work in progress.

Retreat Center:

The Saint Francis Retreat Center recently marked our second anniversary offering retreats. As we

continue to develop and grow, we have determined there is a need to provide guests with one source of information about the many facets of the Abbey.

We have culled information of some of the aspects of the daily life of Mepkin: the Liturgy of the Hours; landscape and gardens; programs offered throughout the year; the Monastic Guest Program; and more. Also, we will include new photos. A copy will be placed in each guest room.

We hope this booklet will help guests to learn more about our community and be comfortable during their stay at the Retreat Center as they renew their spiritual lives. Carole

St. Benedict:

St. Benedict continues to be a place of beauty. Miss Doris has a special touch and this month's feature is below. Thank you for your consistent care of this area, Miss Doris.



Mystery plant:



It is located in St. Clare Walk. Can anyone email me what this plant is?

Odds and Ends:

Last month we featured our new Mormon Volunteer, Sister Teresa. Sister Ruth, who had been with us, and is shown in the first photo, was transferred, BUT, we acquired a new sister, Sister Leila. They are amazing ladies and they have helped us so much in the Greenhouse, clearing debris and always bringing a smile with them!

Ursula, Sister Teresa and Sister Ruth



Sister Leila and Sister Teresa

Projects:

Fence - You will notice that we have a fence in front of St. Bernard. Mepkin has a problem with Visitors and Former Retreatants wandering into restricted areas. Our landscape architect designed the fence, as well as the bed at the sign at the Crossroads, in hopes that people will read this area as off limits. It is an attractive addition. A map is also being developed showing where Visitors and Former Retreatants can go during their visit.



New Fence at St. Bernard

Area across from Br. Stephen's Garden - This area has been a problem for several years. It continued to sink because the roots of the stump of a downed tree rotted. We filled and filled and filled. It has caused the old steps down into the Old Dorm to come apart. Mepkin personnel removed the stump and refilled the hole with dirt. We had Green Carolina take out all the debris and we are spraying to prepare it for planting after the brick steps are restored or re-built.



Broken Steps to Old Dorm Basement

Brick Mason - The Brick Mason will be returning this week to meet about the scope of work that needs to be done at Mepkin. We still have the failing retaining wall at Luce Garden; the above mentioned steps; and as well as the uncovered steps from the 10 man cottage to the lower level of the Old Dorm.

Many thanks to Carole Nicolini (manager at the Retreat Center) for her report, to Howard for the Orchard Report, to Kay Sappol for the photos, and to Langhorne for editing this issue. As you are aware, we have had several operations and some illness among our faithful Volunteers. The good news is that we have two new Volunteers, Natalie from George C's office and John, whom I will photograph next month. We welcome them to our program. During all of this, I had a note from one of the Volunteers, soon to return to us, whom I wish to quote, "Mepkin is God's Doctor's Office. No appointment necessary!"

Thanks for all the nice comments about our program. The fellowship of these people is God's work.
dottie