

Mepkin Abbey Garden Volunteer Newsletter

March 2016



Cleared View from the new bench on the Bluff

We had several projects going on simultaneously this past month. Lots of rain with strong winds gave us a great deal of debris—moss and branches. It was amazing the amount we have picked up, but things look good as they always do when these Volunteers are involved! The above view was cut out by Green Carolina, so Visitors/Retreatants could enjoy sitting on the new memorial bench and enjoy the view both ways.



New view in opposite direction

Our program in February called for pruning while the shrubs and trees were dormant, as well as the regular grooming in each garden. March brings new tasks: feeding shrubs, giving hydrangeas alum sulfate to reduce the pH so they will be a vivid purple and preparing for a very early Easter this year. We will begin to bring the pots that have wintered over in the Greenhouse back to their regular positions and upgrading the pots from winter to summer. The controlled burning has taken place as you will see in the reports.

Garden Updates

Oak Allee:

Several months ago I mentioned that George C, a volunteer, had asked about upgrading the Oak Allee. He and several other men have been working now and steadily cleaning it up, spraying the yupon and mulching the beautiful Live Oak. It is a sight to behold. Please notice their progress as you enter the gates.



Oak Allee refurbished



Shane and John at work



George C loading mulch

Store:

The Store has many new products this early Spring. I hear there is going to be a replica of the Our Lady of Mepkin statue! Here are other new displays below:



New display in Store



New products in Store

Saint Clare:

The featured bloom in Saint Clare this month is the Lenten Rose. Pictured below are the ones that had been hidden (now cleaned around), and the new ones around the area where the statue is. Thanks to Kathy, our Saint Clare person, who has been kept busy grooming out dead fern and weeds.



Close up of old bed of Lenten Rose in St. Clare



Our new Lentewn Rose bed in St. Clare

Cloister:

Sylvia has chosen the Cloister as her regular “gatekeeping” area. This past month was a real treat for us as she brought her Dad, Walter, to work with us for two sessions. They mulched several of the beds on the left side of the Church as well as the beds on each side of the porch there. From there they helped Karen rid the Azaleas on the Walk to the Church! We thank Walter for being with us and helping in such a meaningful way.



Walter and Sylvia

In the same area, the 12 man cottage has been renovated. I am sure the Monks who live here are enjoying the improvements.



Renovated 12 man Cottage

The Orchard:

Why the annual burn? Around February each year, the fields around the Firemen's Memorial and the Labyrinth are burned. As Smokey the Bear says,

“By safely reducing excessive amounts of brush, shrubs and trees, encouraging the new growth of native vegetation, and maintaining the many plant and animal species whose habitats depend on periodic fire...”

The orchard crew took a day off to burn the labyrinth and surrounding fields. Craig came to help us and the burn was completed in record time.

It would be tempting to uncover the citrus but past experience suggests we wait until the end of March.

We hope to embark on an invasive tree control program as the opportunity allows.

Howard



Controlled Burn

Dottie's Note: Thanks to Howard for heading up this effort, to Norm for assisting, and to Craig for learning the ropes!

Luce Garden:

As we feared the Azaleas are already coming to bloom. The blooms appear to be less plentiful and I suspect the crazy warm Christmas got them going too early. It is still beautiful to see them and a harbinger of Spring to come.



Azaleas above the pond in Luce Garden (Craig Clark)

Retreat Center:

A very exciting noted author and spiritual writer will be giving a retreat at Mepkin this

month. Kathleen Norris (poet and author of The Cloister Walk, Dakota and Amazing Grace) will be leading a retreat titled "Would Be Poet Retreat" at our Retreat Center.

This retreat will focus on writing as a spiritual practice, looking at listening, hospitality, and being open to change and revision as essential to the writing process.

Registration fee is \$350 with \$200 to be sent upon receiving your confirmation to: Poet Retreat
1098 Mepkin Abbey Rd. Moncks Corner, SC 29461 (Make Check payable to Mepkin Abbey)

If you cannot attend the Retreat, Ms. Norris will also be lecturing on Friday, March 1st at The Sophia Institute. Cost of the Lecture is \$25.00. To register call Sophia Institute 843-720-8528 or go on line to www.thesophiainstitute.org." This talk will look at ways for the still, small voice in the busy and noisy world. The focus will be on the discipline of using time, routine as a scaffold rather than a rut, and avoiding being open to change and revision as essential to the writing process.

Odds and Ends:

Two new Volunteers!! A bonus month: Steve Hoeckele comes to us from Monks Corner (pictured below) and Pam Booth from Mt. Pleasant (to be pictured). A big welcome to Steve and Pam!



Steve

Visiting Volunteers this month were Dottie's granddaughter, Margaret, who comes every year and Marley, her roommate at Rice Institute in Houston). Many thanks for their work with us.



Marley, Ursula and Margaret

This month we also had a visitor from Christ Our King Church, Joey Bradshaw, the horticulturist there. He was kind enough to donate several Leopard Plants to increase our stand in Saint Clare. They are acclimating in the Green house as you see below. Our thanks to Joey and Christ Our King for this gift. He had worked at Mepkin years ago and was very complimentary about all the improvements our Garden volunteers have made.



Leopard Plants in Greenhouse

Mystery Photos:

I am putting these photos in the “Mystery Photo” article because no one would recognize the Tool Room after the fabulous job that Craig has done on redoing it. We are a work in progress and will be working on organizing the hand tools on the other side on rain days. We all appreciate the hours and effort it took to get this far. Our thanks not only to Craig, but to Peter—who came and evaluated the status of old chemicals we had and even boxed them up and disposed of them with the state. Our thanks also to Nick, who spent a rain day with us working. Everyone has been bowled over by being able to see what we have.





Craig and Nick at work

I want to comment on the lectures that are being held in connection with the Retreat Center Events. I attended my second one, "Conscious Eldering", given by Dr. Ron Pevny (author of Conscious Living: Conscious Aging). To sum: Dr. Pevny "presented a new model for positive aging that focuses on the potential for growth, service, fulfillment, and spiritual exploration." I could not help but think of our Volunteers and their work at Mepkin and how they are "consciously eldering" for themselves!

Many thanks to Howard for the Orchard Report, to Father Guerric and Carole for the report last month, to Craig for the photo, and to Langhorne for editing this issue.

dottie

