

# Mepkin Abbey Garden Volunteer Newsletter

October 2016



Road to Luce garden with a Visitor after a rainstorm (Craig Clark)

Last month brought us a series of rainstorms, making debris our main problem. Our Volunteers were up to the task and they also continued our September maintenance work of pruning and fertilizing the Hydrangeas, Tea Olives, Hawthorns, and Chinese Fringe throughout the property. Each team worked to have their area to perfection for the visit of the Abbot General and we understand he was very taken with the beauty of Mepkin Abbey.

This month will find us continuing the fall cleanup, planting replacement materials, planting trees for the Retreat Center, shrubs as memorials, as well as cool weather herbs and vegetables. Pre-emergent is in the process of being spread to help control the weeds in lawn and we are spraying the embankments and open areas to control unwanted species.

## Garden Updates

### Store:

We have dressed up the bed across from the steps into the Store and we added additional like plants to enhance the show of various plants in St. Clare. The last of the directional signs should be installed this month. They have been a great help to

the Visitor showing which areas are open and which are restricted.

St. Clare:

Kathy, our Tuesday St. Clare Volunteer, returned, much to our delight, having resolved some medical conditions she has. Our thanks to all who filled in for her and kept St. Clare looking so nice.





#### Walk To Church:

On the Walk to the Church we have replaced two of the dead Abelia with new ones, keeping the walk one of calm and serenity on the way to the Church.

#### The Cloister:

The highlight of the Cloister this month was the Russian Sage, which replaced the blooming Daylilies (which have gone dormant). You will remember when the Daylilies go down the Russian Sage with its beautiful purple spires full of yellow butterflies, are at their height.



Russian Sage with butterflies and Brugmansia blooming at the back

#### The Orchard:

The Orchard has been blessed (I hope) with reinforcements. Dottie has brought the Sisters to help with the weeding chores just in the nick of time. I had been concentrating on the blueberries but we were in danger of losing the brambles to an invasion of assorted weeds. Weeds, of course, being plants that are growing in the wrong place. We will also try a pre-emergent herbicide to help reduce the germination of weed in the future.

The figs are putting out a second crop. I have heard of this but haven't been lucky enough to see it at home. I took a few figs to Father Joe when I was last at the Abbey. We can hope that more of the small fruit mature.

Howard

Dottie's Note: An invasion of weeds that Howard mentions is putting it mildly. The Mormon Sisters, Ursula and I have been working like mad to tame the area. This a another example how one group helps another among the Volunteers. Photos say it all.





We are a work in progress, as we cannot spray where there are blackberries, raspberries, blueberries or the citrus trees. These areas have to be pulled and dug by hand. I have spread Snapshot (a pre-emergent) on the open areas in hopes we will be in better shape in the Spring.

Luce Garden:

This month the following photos will be a panorama of Luce and say it all.



Looking from Luce Garden out to the Cooper River



Looking from the bottom of Luce uphill



The Cove from the Overlook at Luce



Our Lady's Room



Path above Lower Pond going uphill



Path above Lower Pond going downhill

**Laurens Cemetery:**

Laurens is an area we keep up that I forget to feature. After the storms it was full of limbs, moss and debris. Thanks to John, Greg and Steve, it is as it should be now.





The Labyrinth:

This time of year the labyrinth is a vision in yellow. It is wonderful to behold.



Sacred Heart Grotto:

Often we see Retreatants sitting on the benches near the Sacred Heart. We have added some color this month with Crotons to compliment the Chinese Fringe and Boxwoods.



St. Benedict:

As usual, St. Benedict has something of interest going on. Miss Doris has it looking better than it ever has. Everywhere we look, there is a surprise!





#### The Cloister:

At this time, the Wooden Sculptures capture our attention. It is time to cut down the sagging grasses, curtail the wild vines that have bloomed and died, and get ready for the wonderful Sweet Grass to come to bloom. The Monday crew took it on and did a fabulous job.





Odds and Ends:

New Volunteers:

In September we were delighted to have several new Volunteers. Mary Ludlow, Sister Zoey, and Elder Edward joined us. Gretchen and Harry Rhodes will join us this month. Mary and the Rhodes will be on the Monday team and the Mormon Volunteers come on Thursday. Welcome to each and every one of you! You are very much appreciated.



Elder Edward and Elder David



Sister Joey



Mary

We will feature Gretchen and Harry Rhodes next month

### Spotlight on a Volunteer

In an effort to get to know each of you a little better, we are choosing a garden volunteer each month to answer a few questions and submit a brief bio for the monthly newsletter. This month we have chosen volunteer Doris Walters. Doris has been volunteering out at Mepkin for five years. She was instrumental in transforming St. Benedicts to the beauty that it is today. You will find Doris most Thursday mornings toiling away in St. Benedicts with a smile on her face and a wave to all that drive past.



Here is a brief bio from Doris:

I am almost 80 years old. I am retired. I spent more than 40 years as the personal assistant to the owner of Medway Plantation. Through my work I met many wonderful people, some of them famous (Bing Crosby and Generals Westmorland and Musgrave to name a few). I have 3 sons and a large number of grand and great grandchildren. Along with gardening, I like to dabble in visual arts – knitting and crochet.



- 1) Who would you want with you if you were stranded on a deserted island?
  - a) Ursula Wells. She can make any situation alright and she is fun to be with.
- 2) If you could do anything you wanted right now, what would it be?
  - a) I have no answer. I'm very content with my life.
- 3) If money was no object, what would you do all day?

- a) Same as above.
- 4) Where do you most want to travel, but have never been?
- a) I've always wanted to go to Australia
- 5) What is your favorite memory?
- a) There are so many to choose from that I can't make a choice – so I'll say the one I'm going to make today.
- 6) What is your favorite movie?
- a) I don't have a favorite movie. I prefer a good book and I'm currently enjoying works by Nicholas Sparks.
- 7) What is the one thing that should be taught in school that isn't already?
- a) I am way out of touch with what the educational system offers.
- 8) What one thing would you change if you had to do it over?
- a) I have done the best I could. There are some things I could have done better but looking back is pointless unless it is for the purpose of making changes. There are times when I didn't live as closely to the Lord as I should have – I learned from those mistakes, made changes, and moved forward.
- 9) If you could share a meal with three people from the past, who would they be?
- a) Moses, Paul, and Billy Graham. Think of the stimulating dinner conversation!
- 10) What actor/actress would play you in your life movie?

Audrey Hepburn or Meryl Streep

Many thanks to Howard for the Orchard Report, to Craig for photos and editing the Volunteer Spotlight, to Kathleen for photos, and to Langhorne for editing this issue. As a postscript, Ursula and I went down the road with Kathleen last week to see Pearl Fryar's Topiary Garden in Bishopsville and Hobcaw Barony near Georgetown. It was a real treat if you have not seen either one of them. A few photos:



Ursula and Dottie with Pearl (and his Topiary in background)(Kathleen Cassels)



Hobcaw Barony

I am reading Baroness of Hobcaw, the story of Belle Baruch (daughter of Bernard Baruch) who saved this property to be kept as is. There is a wonderful book on the story of the Lowcountry properties put in conservation easements (Mepkin is also one) called Rice and Ducks, which I recommend if you want to see how far ahead of the rest of the US that South Carolina is in saving its coastal properties and in so, the flora and fauna who inhabit it. Until next month, peace. Dottie