



Tulip Magnolia

February proved to be a month of rain and then 70-80 degree weather! The effect of the snow and ice is seen in the blooms of the Camellias (half of the blooms have brown buds). Hopefully we will not see the same in the Azaleas, which are budding up. Grasses have been cut back and some serious pruning done on various trees and shrubs. Lists have been made of replacement shrubs and hopefully will be in the ground when you read this.

March brings chores such as feeding the Azaleas and Camellias after they bloom; applying alum sulfate to the Hydrangeas to have them bloom more purple; the prescribed burning will be done to keep the diversity of species in the Labyrinth and Firemen's Memorial; we will begin to fertilize shrubs when they show new growth; and the pots will come back out of the Greenhouse, which were wintered there. The ever present "weed" problem has already arisen and we are trying to get it under control early.

We have several new promising projects that are underway. You will see more about them when they get started. We are trying to raise the level of maintenance on some of the areas, but are careful not to extend our workload too much as our Volunteer power has its limits.

GARDEN UPDATES:

Store/ St. Clare:

We are continuing to work with the effects of the ice and snow. One of our new improvements will be to screen the backside of the Parking Court as you start down the walking path of St. Clare.



All the green is weeds!

Cloister:

We have removed two overgrown Cedar Trees from the edges of the mixed bed and will be replacing one area with another Palmetto to compliment the others that are there.



Missing Cedar Tree in Mixed Bed

In upgrading, the area around the raised Vegetable Beds has been sodded and new grass is already growing through the sod. This area has been a problem with mulch washing from the rain. A decision was made that we discontinue to try to grow vegetables in these beds. The labor to maintain them made it impossible and we are unable to grow enough for the Mnastery's use. We will be filling one with Basil to supply the annual Pesto made for the Brothers. The others will have flowers in them.



New sod around Raised Vegetable Beds

Orchard:

Is Winter past? Do all the blooming trees and flowers know something the Farmers Almanac doesn't? Time will tell!

Norm and I have been cautious as a result of last years late freeze. I am afraid we lost one of the orange trees. The warming bulb was plugged in separately from the other trees with the plug going through two doors to the outlet. Too complicated I'm afraid and no way to check that the bulb was lit but to partly unwrap the insulation. Another lesson for next year.

We'll be spreading the bounty of the Brother's kitchen (compost) to our plants in the orchard. The soil in the orchard is very rich and we are looking forward to a more productive year.

Fingers crossed. Howard

Editor's Note: We have three new Kieffer Pear trees at the Orchard.



New Kieffer Pear Trees (stay tuned for pears on the table!)

Luce Garden:



Misty Sunday Morning (Kathleen Cassels)



River in the Mist (Kathleen Cassels)

These beautiful photos were taken by a Docent at the Monastery when she was on Retreat. Mepkin is such a place of beauty.

In improvements, several areas that had no grass were sodded when we had extra sod from the raised bed project.



Sodding near the Upper Pond (note pollen in the pond)



Sodding where the drainage problem has washed away the grass

Columbarium:

Three Oaks construction work on the niches (awaiting the vaults for the urns to come) and the bridge/new steps are complete except for some “clean up” and re-sodding of the site. Peter will be rehabbing the hill with plantings and we will be adding some different materials on the hill on the niche side where the Sweet Grass has not taken.



New steps: note coir logs in place to retain washing before planting

Odds and Ends:

New Bee Hives:



New Hives

Two new Bee Hives have been installed by Diana Rouse. She hopes to install more and Craig is “interning” with her. We are delighted to have Bees back. We are the perfect setting for a variety of flora from which they can draw. They also help us in pollenating some of our species.



Bee in Camellia (at work already-worker bee)(Craig Clark)

Blooms:



Cherry Blossoms (these are the trees planted last year at the turn to the Retreat Center)(Craig Clark)

How Mepkin Abbey Supports Itself:

This is the fourth in a series of how Mepkin supports itself. This month we feature the Columbarium Operation. It is managed by Robbie Metts whom you

see below.



Robbie Metts

You are aware that Mepkin is installing Phase Two at the Columbarium at present. Robbie tells me there are 750 total niches, with the new phase being 280. Information about the Columbarium can be found on the Website: www.mepkinabbey.org. To visit and discuss purchasing a niche, please call Robbie at 843-830-6695 or email him at Robbiemetts1@gmail.com. The Columbarium is open to all (Roman Catholic or not). Answers to frequently asked questions is on the site as well as a very good video with photos. A brochure can also be downloaded.

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. Our choice for Volunteer of the Month needs no introduction. Dottie Roddy is the heart and soul of the volunteer program. She has an innate ability to see what needs done and the tenacity to see it through completion. Her love for the Brothers of Mepkin and the place they call home is evident in all that she does. Enjoy:



Wedding photo

I was born and raised in Knoxville, Tennessee—where I am still a resident. I graduated with honors from Holton-Arms School in Washington, DC and attended the University of Tennessee in Pre-Law and Philosophy. I met my first husband, John McKenzie, in El Paso, Texas, where my boarding school suitemate married his best friend. We had two children and he was killed in an auto accident in 1966.



Neilly, Neil, Margaret, Jody (my late sister) and Katherine Bond.
Patrick, me, John McKenzie and Jim.

I was married to Pat Roddy and we had two more children, Kate and John-David. We adopted the older

boys and became a family. Pat died 9 years ago. On my 75th birthday, we all gathered at Blackberry Farm in Walland, Tennessee for Thanksgiving.



I have 14 grandchildren. They are:

Bottom row: Jaxon Willis, Anna Claire, me, Grace and Whit Roddy

Middle row: Taylor Willis, Olivia Cunningham, Caroline Roddy

Back row: Liza and Laura Cunningham, Katherine and Noah Lavine,

McKenzie Roddy, Emily Cunningham, Margaret, Werth, Jackson, Malerie and Michael Roddy.

I have one great grandson, Henry McKenzie Lavine



Henry Lavine

and another great grandson on the way!

In Knoxville, I served on several boards or was a member of: Chairman of the first Finance Board for the Diocese of Knoxville, Leadership Knoxville, Tennessee Women's Forum, Junior League, Knoxville Garden Club. I managed the properties of Pat's family for 25 years and then formed Igawaga, Inc., to evaluate and manage real estate investments. We also expanded into development, property acquisition as well as Private Placements. We opened a property management company in 2013, which my son and 2 partners now own and run.

In 2011, I accepted the position of Grounds and Gardens Director at Mepkin, along with Ursula Wells (Volunteer Director). In 2015, we hired Craig Clark to Assistant Director of Gardens and Grounds and he became full Director in July of 2017. I continue to do the computer work (records, Newsletter, etc.) and he does the heavy lifting! I plan to step back more and more for the next several years and am able to travel more with my family and friends.

This past 10 years have been the golden years for me. I feel privileged to have a serene life, full of family and friends, seeing God and His work everywhere. The journey of my life has been amazing and I am grateful to have ended where I am.

1-Who would you want with you if you were stranded on a desert island?

Being a "loner", probably no one unless I could have my grandchildren

2-If you could do anything you wanted right now, what would it be?

I am doing anything I want right now.

3-If money were no object, what would you do all day?

Exactly what I am doing now.

4-Where do you most want to travel, but have never been?

Greece and the Greek Isles (I am going via Sea Cloud-3 masted ship-in June)

5-What is your favorite memory?

Having all of my family around me for my 75th birthday.

6-What is your favorite movie?

"Saving Grace", a British movie from years ago.

7-What is the one thing that should be taught in school that isn't already?

CIVICS and how to be an American citizen.

8-What one thing would you change if you had to do it over?

My journey has consisted of things I did not sign up for, but they made me who I am today, so I have no regrets.

9-If you could share a meal with three people from the past, who would they be?

Gertrude Bell, Benjamin Graham, Mildred Brown

10-What actor/actress would play you in your life movie?

No way there would be a movie about me

11-Why do you Volunteer at Mepkin?

The first time I drove into Mepkin, I knew I was home. Over the years, the Brothers have been my rock during serious cancer and a bad time in my life. It is so rewarding to have been brought to this place. I am forever grateful and this will be my final home.

Many thanks to Kathleen Cassels and to Craig for the photographs and the Spotlight on Volunteers article, and to Howard for the Orchard Report. I have not prevailed on Langhorne again this month to edit as she is still recovering

from the flu.

This month I leave you with a quote from a book I am re-reading called, Seven Sacred Pauses by Sister Macrina Wiederkehr, OSB.

“There is something in the cycles of the earth that speaks to the restless human heart. When we truly listen to the call of the seasons of the day and the year, our listening is transformed into what many people call prayer.”

Come pray with us at the Gardens of Mepkin.

Happy Lent! dottie