May brought increased maintenance work with the major work being done on the Azaleas. Our Volunteers completed the Azalea and Camellia Feeding Program and have been busy pruning and de-vining the Azaleas—a never-ending job on the grounds. The Hydrangeas, now in full bloom, have been fed again and spent blooms removed from perennials (so they will continue to bloom) and shrubs alike. The Roses, Easter Lilies, Blackberries and Daisies have been a riot of color. The Greenhouse Show in the Arbor was a huge success, as was the workday given us by The Charleston County Catholic Youth Group.

In June we will continue to work on the Azaleas as well as try to keep up with the possible many rain days ahead.
GARDEN UPDATES:

Store/ St. Clare:

The front of the Store has been a riot of blooms from the Roses, Hydrangeas, Yarrow and Lantana, and from there, one is enclosed with an amazing variety of ferns on both sides of St Clare, and even the Dwarf Gardenias are blooming there this year!

Front of Store with Hydrangeas

The Greenhouse Show in the Arbor was a wonderful success. Many thanks for all who donated towards this effort. The Garden Program was rewarded with over double the money donated last year. Many thanks go to Craig and Ursula for keeping up the stock and keeping track of everything. This effort really will help our “wish” list.
Greenhouse Show

Cloister:

As you approach the Cloister, you will see the Easter Lilies blooming. This is one of our recycling projects. We save the Lilies (as well as the Hydrangeas) that Father Guerric uses to decorate the Church at Easter and plant them. This is the time that Easter Lilies bloom normally.
Easter Lilies at the Administration Building

The raised beds are full of flowers and Basil. Many thanks to George N for providing all. The new Chef has requested one of the beds for the things he wants to grow. We applaud him!

Flower beds

I promised to keep you up on the progress of Brother Stephen’s garden in the Cloister. You saw it last month “just planted”. It is quite a sight now!
Many thanks to Brother Joe who comes each year with the materials and puts it in for Brother Stephen.

**Orchard:**

There will not be a report on the Orchard this month. Howard broke his collarbone and is in a sling. We wish him quick healing!
Luce Garden:

We have been busy keeping Luce in good order with an average of 4-5 weddings per month!

Renovated Azalea bed in Luce

The Holly Ferns have been cleaned out, the Azaleas pruned and de-vined, and the Hydrangeas blooming more beautifully than ever.
Hydrangeas in Luce

Our thanks to all our Volunteers who have stepped in and helped with what had to be done in Luce Garden. The original Luce group has had a serious reduction in numbers. Hint, hint—we could certainly use help here!

Columbarium:

As you are aware, the construction part of Stage 2 of the Columbarium, is awaiting the niches to arrive to be installed. In the meantime, a repair of the erosion problem we were having on the hill down into the ravine involved underground work as well as the work seen in the photo below. We hope this will solve the problem.

Erosion Repair at Columbarium

Green Carolina also refurbished the hill above where we had lost quite a few of the Sweet Grass. The Landscape Architect specified several other species that could do better in areas that may also need refurbishing.
Refurbishing the hillside in the Columbarium

The Ravine is coming out as you will see from the photos. The ferns along the steps down onto the bridge are beautiful.

Ferns on steps down
**Blooms at the Bridge in the Ravine**

**Odds and Ends:**

We have two new Volunteers this month! Steve Dexter and Margaret Hagood. Welcome to both of them! They have already been working hard and helping us keep up.

**Steve Dexter**

*Dottie's note: Margaret will be pictured next month*

We will be losing “Olivia”, one of our longtime Mormon Volunteers. She has been
transferred. She honored us recently with a Violin Program. Godspeed, Olivia, and come back to see us. Thank you for all the work you put in for Mepkin.

Olivia playing the Violin Program while we gather for lunch.

Another sad note is that Doris Walters, a longtime Volunteer, has moved and so decided at 81 she needed to wrap up the new long drive to work with us. She will be sorely missed. You will remember the photos of her 80th birthday we celebrated. Miss Doris kept St. Benedict to perfection. Thank you, Doris, for your many years of loyalty to our program. We hope you will still come to our celebrations!
Doris Walters

Craig reports on an exciting event for us:

On the last Saturday in April, we had a wonderful group of young adults come out to Mepkin and volunteer their time. Along with Joey Bradshaw from Christ Our King, and Tim Jackson from Schneider Tree Care, these youngsters from Catholic youth groups in the Charleston area joined our forces to groom and clean up the African American Cemetery. They spent an entire morning removing non-native and invasive plants, pulling out fallen debris, and also grooming the area around the cemetery. After their hard work, we had a picnic lunch back at the tool shed and then went on a tour of the grounds. It does my heart good to see these great young people giving of their time and energy to help others. Well Done!!!!

Dottie's note: Thanks to Joey for thinking of Mepkin and arranging all of this with Craig.
The Charleston County Catholic Youth Group

Equipment (huge Chipper) Tim Jackson donated to use as well as his time, and safety equipment

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
Our choice for Volunteer of the Month is Tim Jackson. Tim has been volunteering at the monastery for a little over a year. Tim runs a local branch of Schneider Tree Care and has been so helpful in removing some of the more dangerous and difficult tree and limb problems we’ve encountered at Mepkin. His story follows:

I was born and raised in the upstate of New York in the Saratoga Springs area. I grew up farming and caring for trees and horses. I am an avid outdoorsman. I thought I would enter ministry in my teen years and so I moved to Greenville SC and enrolled into the Bob Jones University counseling program, found my bride and later completed an MA in Counseling from their seminary. Throughout my education, I became disillusioned with the Christianity I had been exposed to and went into the field of Arboriculture. The economic crash of 2008 had its effects and I found employment with the Greenville County Sheriff's Office as a deputy. I enjoyed some aspects of policing but found I could not handle the level of emotional suffering I encountered on a day by day basis. I brought too much pain home with me. I turned to alcohol and neglected my wife and family. I was involved in two separate officer involved shootings within a short period of time in 2012 and with horrible habits in place for coping I quickly went downhill trying to medicate/drink my way through PTSD, depression, anger and selfishness. By God's grace I was stopped and charged with Misconduct in Office. My wife left me and I committed to a 7 month recovery program through Miracle Hill Ministries in Greenville SC. There on the grounds of a former monastery in Greenville I turned back to the God I had been running from. I started really praying again and I submitted to a long painful road of recovery and rebuilding. By 2014 my wife came back to me and we moved to Charleston to start a branch of Schneider Tree Care. Today I am literally living my dream with my bride of 16 years, daughters, one unknown on the way and a small farm occupying what little time I have left. I have found that the pain, suffering and road I traveled has not been wasted. Rather this journey has provided unique opportunities for me to lead my team as I teach and train the next generation of arborists to care for creation and avoid the mistakes I made as a young man. God has been good to our family!!
1-Who would you want with you if you were stranded on a desert island?

My wife, Crystal.

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

I’m actually doing what I want to do as a manager/arborist.

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

Travel more with my family.

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

Alaska.

5-What is your favorite memory?

I almost lost my marriage in 2013. After much counseling and a year of separation my wife told me she wanted to get back with me. I will never forget the moment she told me that she wanted to stay married to me, but that I had to put the ring on her finger in a special way. I put that ring back on her finger overlooking the Charleston Harbor. Playing

6-What is your favorite movie?

Gladiator.

7-What is the one thing that should be taught in school that isn’t already?
Entrepreneurial thinking.

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

How I spent money in my twenties.

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

Galileo, C.S. Lewis, and Theodore Roosevelt

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

Kevin James.

11-Why do you Volunteer at Mepkin?

Mepkin is a blessing to my family. We frequent the grounds for a multitude of reasons and are constantly bringing our guests as well. As an arborist I thought I had something to offer when I moved to Cordesville in 2016.

Many thanks to Craig for the report on the Catholic Youth Group and for the Spotlight on a Volunteer and to Langhorne for editing. We send our prayers for healing for Howard as he is greatly missed, especially his wonderful wit!

Come see us, dottie