The BIG news this month was the Hurricane Dorian that visited Mepkin in September. Luckily, serious damage to buildings, etc. was minimal. The preparations are always labor intensive as we have over 40 pots on the grounds and many things that can fly around if not secured. Here are a few of the photos in preparation that Craig sent (I was evacuated to Tennessee!).
Greenhouse storage for some of the pots

Breakroom and Tool Shed being prepped
Beehives Secured

Benches at Luce secured
Cross on tree at Store taken down and stored
Rocking chairs at St. Peter secured

It is a huge task to get ready, as you can see. Then comes the storm. Dorian left debris similar to Matthew two years ago. Everywhere there were tiny twigs as well as limbs and the like. The good news is Craig discovered if the Volunteers picked up the larger debris, the ZeroTurn mower would mulch the twigs. With Matthew, we had to rake the entire grounds of the Abbey! Bless them, the Volunteers showed up on their days and Mepkin was mostly cleared in no time. Our thanks also to the Brothers who started storing the pots in the Greenhouse before our people got there.
James, Marcelo, Jackson and Jay in four Gators hauling debris! Many, many thanks to these young men.

Mepkin continues (after the hurricane) to have little regular rain showers, so watering has been on the list again. Craig tells me with the limited Volunteers, he decided not to put all the pots back out (some need work) and designated me as the “Pot Lady”. When I told my grandchildren, they thought that was hilarious. It took me a while to understand their definition of “Pot”. Getting all the pots ready for the Creche Festival, I may look into their version of pot!

Speaking of the Creche Festival, I gave you incorrect dates for 2019. Sorry about that. Here are the REAL dates:

**CRECHE FESTIVAL:** November 18-24; November 29-December 7. Online registration began on October 1st.

What is on our maintenance list? Fertilizing Daylilies, Hydrangeas, and dividing perennials if needed. Plant any trees or shrubs needed to replace ones that have died. Plant cool season herbs and cut back herbs that have gone to seed. Pre-emergent goes down for the lawn. Blooming now are the Beautyberry, Abelia, Butterfly Bush and Mums.

**Update on Gardens:**
Store:

The front of the Store has been cleaned up and should have new pots by next month.

Inside, preparations for the Creche Festival are in full swing. It is already very festive!
St. Clare:
The Encore Azaleas are blooming again.. as well as the peaceful ferns. Kathy continues to keep everything in amazing shape!

Encore Azaleas

Ferns

On the Walk to the Church, the Abelia is in full bloom.
Abelia

**Cloister:**

The Russian Sage is the blooming feature in the Cloister this month. Soon we will have yellow butterflies flitting from one bloom to another.
The Church:

The Church at the Abbey was built in the early 1990ies. Major repairs/refurbishing are necessary at this point in time. The repairs/refurbishing have begun and you can see the scaffolding all around. It is a huge job.
**Orchard:**

We had what must have been a midnight raid on the orchard. The electric fence was pulled off some of the fence posts and a few insulators were broken. I hope there will be enough spares to cobble the fence together.

We make a habit of shutting the fence off when we are working inside. After hearing Craig’s description of getting too close to a hot wire, we try to avoid the experience.

I might have neglected to turn the wire on before we left. A deer got tangled in the cold wire and tore it up in an attempt to escape. Had the wire been hot the deer would’ve given it a wide berth.

We are prepping a row for strawberries and the persimmons are ripening. We will have our work cut out for us.

Howard

**Columbarium:**

Last month I showed photos of the full field of Black eyed Susan and the recently cleaned up Ravine. Here is the Black eyed Susan bed now, slowly going to sleep for the winter.
Black eyed Susan
Look what has happened in the Ravine!

Ravine recovered

Luce Garden:

Luce is also preparing for Winter. The Sasanqua Camellia are in bloom but the daisies are down, as are the Native Hibiscus.
Sasanqua Camellia

View of Luce Garden Towards the Cooper River
The Cove at the Lookout at Luce

Labyrinth:

This time of year the Labyrinth simply shines. It is awesome to stroll through the Labyrinth surrounded by all these magnificent yellow blooms.
Labyrinth

St. Benedict:

At St. Benedict (the Columbarium Office) we have a showing of Surprise Lilies.

Odds and Ends:

Recently I read an article in Better Homes and Gardens about the benefits of eating Mushrooms. As Mushrooms are the “cash crop” of Mepkin, I thought I should share this information with you.

Better Homes and Gardens: “1 to 2 servings of mushrooms a week can help reduce your risk of mild cognitive impairment (a precursor of Alzheimer’s) by 43%. Experts say the antioxidants in mushrooms may prevent the buildup of plaques in the brain. One serving is about 1 cup of sliced mushrooms.”

Bat Boxes:

Mepkin now has bat boxes!

“Here are some photos of the bat box installation and dedication from the past two Saturdays. Sawyer Thompson (troop 59 BSA) and I have
worked on his Eagle Scout Project since last November. Father Kevin and Father Guerric attended the ceremony along with Sawyer's family. Kevin read from Psalm 8 and spoke about Trappists being stewards of all God's creatures. We now have bat habitats in the field on the road to Luce Garden, near the retreat center, and on the gravel drive out to Luce. Hopefully next spring will see the arrival of bats. “ Craig

Installation near Retreat Center (in background)
Sawyer Thompson, his Dad and members of his troop
Dedication by Father Kevin

As you are aware, the Garden Program has small “Take home a piece of Mepkin” events, and those donations supplement the cost of the Garden Program. We had the Succulent Show which included the wonderful Brother Joseph Fig Trees and the Native Hibiscus event. This past month, I received a photo from a docent who had one of the Native Hibiscus, and it has done very well. I took two of the Figs to my home in Tennessee to pot up, thinking I would need to winter them in the garage as they would be so small. Lo and behold! Look what happens to things you take home from Mepkin! The Garden Program thanks all of you who participate in these events. Before long, we will have the Asian Persimmons, along with recipes to share on how to use them. They are one of my favorites and if you have not tried them, please do!
Native Hibiscus

These figs will be planted this Fall! And they have fruit!
My thanks to Howard for the Orchard Report, to Craig for the prep and after photos of the Hurricane along with the Bat Box project, and to Langhorne for editing.

I leave you with this quote:

“Even light activity, such as gardening……can help boost the brain. New research shows that each hour of exercise helped reduce the aging of the brain.”

We desperately need additional Volunteers. If you can help us, please contact Craig Clark at Mepkinvolunteers@gmail.com or 843-709-8362.

Think how much longer you can live with your young brain! dottie