

Mepkin Abbey Garden Newsletter

November 2019



Santa Maria de la Esperanza (Our Lady of Hope) in Esmeraldas, Ecuador (see Part I of the history at the end of the Newsletter)

November brought cooler weather at long last! This past month we were busy redoing pots put in the Greenhouse during the hurricane, making them ready for Fall and for the Creche Festival. We will be continuing a general cleanup and will be fertilizing the roses again (we took care of the Dwarf Gardenias in October). We have been hand mulching from place to place. This year our orders were to reduce the number of pots and to concentrate the Mulch (only at St. Clare and the Store/Visitor's Center). The Volunteers have been digging up the Mondo Grass that was out of place and plan to pot it up for the Spring Show.

Blooming now are Nandina, Yaupon Holly, and the few Mums we have. The leaves are beginning to fall, but lucky for us, the Zero Turn Mower makes them mulch for the lawns.

Update on Gardens:

The Store:



As promised, here is the new pot at the Store. As we go through the Gardens in this newsletter, I will have photographs of all the pots Ann and I have done. Ann, a wonderful Volunteer, agreed to help me with developing the pots needed for winter/Creche Festival. She was a wonderful help and I could not have done without her. A big thank you, Ann.

St. Clare:

As we leave St. Clare and the Walk to the Church, we have replaced the overgrown "Dwarf Gardenias" and put the old ones in the hospital to recover. These will later be planted on the grounds in the Spring. Here is our new feature:



Variegated Yucca at the Crossroads

Walking on to the permanent Creche, we added color to the pot there and color along the way.



Scene at the permanent Creche

Continuing on the Walk to the Church, we view the St. Mary Grotto, which is still blooming.



St. Mary Grotto

Orchard:

A big day was coming up if the rain holds off.

Jimmy brought in some strawberry plants and the accessories we need to plant them. The ground has been prepared. We have a 100' row tilled with mushroom compost.

We will also be preparing sites for blueberries. The soil analysis showed that we need to make the soil much more acidic. We will be adding wettable sulfur and peat moss but according to Clemson, we will need to wait until spring to plant. I got some great plants that will have to wait in the greenhouse until the soil is adjusted.

Oh a farmers life.

Howard

Columbarium:



Sweet Grass in full bloom at entry to Columbarium

Fireman's Memorial:

This beautiful pot was done by Ann in honor of her son, who is a fireman.



Pot at Firemen's Memorial

Labyrinth:



This pot at the Labyrinth replaced a huge fern that was here. The Volunteers have taken some of the large ferns and divided them to have for the Spring Show.

Retreat Center:

Here is our take on welcoming Retreatants to the Retreat Center:



There are a pair of these, celebrating Halloween and Thanksgiving

Odds and Ends:

Father Columba:

Father Columba took simple vows. Congratulations to him and all who helped prepare him for this wonderful step.



Father Columba in his new robes

Creche Festival:

November 18-24; November 29-December 7

Do not forget to make plans. On line registration. The fruitcakes are ready! The Store is full of goodies as is the Creche Shop!



Fruitcake Bakers

Annual Lunch Meeting of the Garden Volunteers:

Each October we hold a lunch meeting to discuss what we have accomplished and to set new Goals for the new year. The rain held off and a good time was had by all.





Mepkin Goals for 2019/20

- 1. Continue to maintain the grounds with less.** *Less money and fewer volunteers*
- 2. Grow our Volunteer Program and strive to make the experience enjoyable.**
 - a. Church bulletins** *Volunteers are asked to put a notice in their church bulletins to recruit new volunteers.*
 - b. Friends of existing volunteers.**
 - c. Greg and Jill presentation (host garden clubs?)** *Jill and Greg are willing to go to garden clubs or church groups with their presentation.*
 - d. Social media.** *Facebook or Nextdoor etc. Use social media to let people know about volunteer opportunities in Mepkin Gardens. Nextdoor is a neighborhood social media site. Moncks Corner and Bonneau area in particular would be helpful.*
- 3. Continue to open up area at "Memorial Arbor" and begin construction.**
- 4. Clean up the Magnolia Alee between the "friends" cemetery and the columbarium.**

Santa Maria de la Esperanza:

Father Stan sent the following background on the Trappistines the Mepkin Brothers support.

As we have many photos and information, I will be breaking this up into three parts in a series, as we have done before with other subjects. Stay

tuned!

Santa Maria de la Esperanza: PART I

“Santa Maria de la Esperanza, Our Lady of Hope, was founded in 1990 by a group of four Sisters from the Trappistine monastery at Tulebras, Spain. The founding Superior was a former Abbess of Tulebras and she was accompanied by her blood mother, an oblate of the community, and two other very exceptional women. They came to a very poor section of Ecuador in the northwestern corner of the country near the city of Esmeraldas.

The foundresses had a vision for the future community, found a property on a high bluff overlooking the Esmeraldas River about 10 kilometers from the city. They built a small monastery (which later became the guesthouse) and in 1992, in order to open a novitiate, they had to have a fully functioning “Father Immediate”, a men’s monastery that would oversee their development. The Abbot General at the time was an Argentinian and felt that the men’s communities in Spain were overburdened with the care of many women’s communities. So he looked to the United States and believed Mepkin, under its young new abbot, Father Francis, would be perfect for this responsibility. The Mepkin community met several times to discuss this request of the Abbot General and the foundresses of Esmeraldas (as the community is generally named) and by community vote, accepted this request.

They have grown by leaps and bounds in the nearly 30 years since their founding. They built a permanent monastery next to the now guesthouse, received and trained many Ecuadorian women and now form a community of 32 Sisters. Three of the four foundresses are still alive and two are very much still a main part of the life of the community; the third is in the infirmity with pretty severe alzheimer's patients. 24 total solemn professed, four in temporary vows and four in the novitiate. Most of them have entered in their late 20s or early 30s, though those who have recently entered have done so in their early 40s. (Hence it is not a community of teenagers and folks in their early 20s!) Most are from Ecuador, but they do have two from Columbia, one from Venezuela, one from Mexico and one from Peru. Some of them come from other religious Orders. The average age is about 50. The youngest is 32, the oldest 87. Most are in their 40s and 50s. The present superior is one of the youngest at 43. She was elected in 2017.”

The following photos are of the area around the Monastery. Next Month we will view some of the beautiful buildings. What an incredible place! My thanks to Father Stan for supplying the photos and information.





My thanks to Howard for the Orchard Report, to Craig and Sylvia for the Annual Lunch report and Goals, to Father Jonas, and to Father Stan for all the information and photos, and to Langhorne for editing.

Happy Thanksgiving to each of you. We have much to be thankful for in American. God Bless America, dottie