

Mepkin Abbey Garden Newsletter

December 2019



Wreath for Creche Festival (Jamie and Dennis Nelson)

November found us readying the grounds and gardens for the Creche Festival. We kept busy with our continuing cleanup for winter, developing new pots and grooming any places the frost had nipped them, and spreading new mulch in various areas.

As the cold weather comes in, pruning will start on the shrubs and trees that have gone dormant. We need to prune back the climbing roses also. Leaves are kept under control by the ZeroTurn Mower mulching them into the lawn.

Update on Gardens:

The Store:



Jamie's workers from Town and Village Garden Club in Pinopolis arriving



The result of their work. Many thanks to these ladies for participating in helping make the Creche Festival a success



The Creche Store

St. Clare:

As our Visitors enter St. Clare, they are greeted by various outdoor Creche scenes.



This is a perennial favorite!



Cloister:

The Sweet Grass on the hill at the Cloister are in bloom again.



Orchard:

The orchard has taken a big step. The strawberries I have talked about are in the ground. Jimmy Livingston was our advisor (, and worked too.)

I had tilled the planting site the previous weeks and Norm took out weeds. We mounded the row and covered it with black plastic Jimmy brought in. We tucked in the edges. Jimmy had a roller with pyramid spikes that looked like a medieval torture device that punctured the plastic plastic and spaced the strawberries. The plants came in plastic trays shaped like the spikes.

The plants are off and running.

We have some of the Fig plants and picked a few oranges. The persimmons have done very well but they mostly go to the brothers and volunteers.

Howard

Odds and Ends:

New Volunteer:

Once again we are lucky to have a new Volunteer. Robin Bencivenga joined us in November. Welcome, Robin! We are so glad to have you.



Robin

Creche Festival:

I took a stroll through the Creche display before it opened. Here are

several selections of the Creche show.



The wonderful Creche depicting the Mepkin Brothers



Now this was a surprising Creche









How the Annual Wreath Comes Together:

I think very few people realize the hours and hours it takes to produce the wonderful wreath on the Library each year. It is a labor of love of Jamie and Dennis Nelson and their "elves". Here are some photos of them "putting it all together".



Their parking lot!



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 2

Background: “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.

Part 2 features the various buildings at Esperanza:

“ The weather is always hot and humid. They are some 15 kilometers from the Pacific Ocean and on the equator. It never seems to go below 70 degrees and the humidity is always high. There is a rainy season and a dry season (more or less six months of each) and often, thank God, there is a cloud cover.

“Here are some pictures of the the buildings that I, or others, have taken over the years.”





The Institute for Regenerative Agriculture:

I had heard “rumors” about this new program at Mepkin, but discovered the details on the Mepkin Website. To learn more, go to www.mepkinabbey.org.

To sum: this is an affiliate program at Mepkin Abbey to contribute to the sustainable earth movement and develop an alternative to industrial farming. The goal is for the workers to experience how small farms can once again become integral to the local communities. They participants will learn how to grow vegetables from seed and learn the business of selling their produce. It is open to men and women 18 to 40 years old, of any or no faith tradition. It will run from August-June. Jimmy Livingston, the manager of the Mushroom Operation, will head up this program with the Assistance of Johanna (his wife). Technical support will be provided by Clemson University’s Cooperative Extensive Service. For further information and to receive an application form: regenag.map@gmail.com.

My thanks to Howard for the Orchard Report, Sylvia for the Volunteer Photo, and Father Stan for all the information and photos of Esperanza. Always, many thanks to Langhorne for editing.

This month I want to share a piece I came across:

“I wonder. That is who I am. That is what I do. Not because I am lost and searching, but because I am found and held. From the safety of certainty, from the assurance of inexhaustible grace and love. I am set free and at liberty to ponder all the wonderful things.” Boyd Hopkins, Blackberry Mountain Head Naturalist.

Open your heart to prepare during this Advent for the greatest gift God gives us, His Son. Merry Christmas! dottie

