

Mepkin Abbey Garden Newsletter

October 2020



French Hydrangea in St. Clare

In September, we began to organize the work ahead and compiled a comprehensive task list to operate more efficiently. We have been trying to put several Volunteers in one area to complete the various maintenance needs in that area. Mepkin is a huge area but slowly, it is getting back under control. Rain has been plentiful and currently we are trying to keep the Gators off the lawns as they can cause ruts.

This month we will continue to remove spent blooms, divide perennials if needed, plant cool season herbs, redo pots for Fall/Winter and ready the area of the Memorial Arbor site for planting trees, shrubs and plants. Blooming is Lantana, French Hydrangeas, Abelia, Beautyberry and Russian Salvia.

The grounds continue to evoke peace and serenity. Drive out and visit in this time of great upheaval in our country. Immerse yourself in God's wonderful gift of the beauty found at Mepkin. Stop in the Store. Take home a remembrance of your day. You will be glad you took this time away from the stress.



Updates on the Gardens:

Store:

Recently, we found we had a mishap at one of the large planters at the Store. Someone backed into it and bent it out of shape. It was time for the Fall flowers, so we chose Ornamental Peppers, Cabbage, Mums and a bit of Mundo to fill everything out. Ann did her usual wonderful job. We placed them at the signs this time in hopes they will not be a fatality again!



The Lantana is trying to take over the Store! We had a crew cutting back everything from Hydrangeas, Nandinas, and Yarrow for the oncoming cooler weather.

The Store is open and would like more visitors. This is an easy way to support the work of the Monks in this time of not being able to have Retreatants or the Creche Festival.

St. Clare:

The Arelia Eligantissimo is blooming and soon the “Tractor Seat” or Leopard Plant will put out yellow blooms. We loved having these blooming in the Fall when the Creche Festival Visitors were here.



Walk to the Church:

We have removed the Pineapple Lilies that did not do well and replaced them with three Abelia that are green in the Spring and then turn golden in the Summer.



New Abelia



Abelia on the hill by the Administration Building

Cloister:

The roses are about spent in the bed by the Church but have been lovely this year, thanks to Sylvia.



Rose bed

The Plumbago continues to bloom also.



Plumbago



Russian Salvia in bloom

The Church:

The Brothers have moved back in the Church and it is simply lovely. It will be

wonderful when Visitors can also worship in this architectural beauty.





Of course, the arrangements Father Guerric does out of materials on the property, enhance the experience of being in the Church. Here are a few examples in the photographs that Father Jonas sent me:



Labyrinth:

Each year I look forward to seeing the wonderful yellow blooms as they take over the Labyrinth. Here they are again:



Orchard:

I always look forward to Howard's report. He has a unique take on the challenges he faces.

I am happy to say my partner has been back to Mepkin. Norm's wife Ginger is recovering . Thankfully their daughters have pitched in so Norm can get a time away.

I had some pictures of persimmons in our last issue but by the next week there was only one piece of fruit. I picture a platoon of raccoons attacking the trees. My reason for that is my trees and grapes. This year I caught 2 raccoons and carried them out of the county. There are always more moving in. I will include a picture of one of my fuyu persimmons that has aluminum flashing on the trunk to keep the critters from climbing. I also trimmed back some neighboring trees that the raccoons can swing from. They are very agile. We may try this next year since in addition to eating the fruit there were quite a few branches broken.

Norm and I amended the soil around the blueberries with soluble sulfur, fertilizer, compost and topped it off with pine straw that Dennis found for us. Blueberries thrive on acidic soil. Spring will tell.

There's always something happening.

Howard

PS: Lost my partner again but I will muck around again

Below is Howard's solution to critters at his home!



Armored Orchard at Howard's

Institute for Regenerative Agriculture:

The Sale the first week in September sold out! Success once again. Unfortunately, Jimmy's son soon thereafter was seriously burned in a car accident, but Walid and Jordon carried on. Currently, they are selling the rest of the crops in the Greenhouse for 50 cents each. There are varieties of lettuces, kale, etc.. If you would like some, contact Jimmy at jlivingsto@homesc.com. You will be helping Mepkin to get through this very rough period for them financially.

Here is Jimmy's report:

The farm is still going, just downsized for the fall. We're putting in a small garden behind the greenhouse for now. Should be 1/3 acre. We've sold 4000 plants this year; I consider that remarkable. It shows us there is a need for starter plants. We can always grow that side. We've built a small compost bin behind the old fiberglass greenhouse, we'll be asking for clean leaves and small green materials from the volunteers. We're using this as a teaching tool. The mushrooms have been holding steady at around 300 lbs a week. That's still improving; we expect to be around 400 lbs per week soon. The farmers are really embracing the monastic approach to farming.



Here is the Fall farm fields to be planted



Here is the Compost Bin they have built

St. Benedict:

St. Benedict has its usual different things blooming that keep it interesting. Thanks to Sylvia and Mary, it always looks nice.



Surprise Lilies peeking through the Black Eyed Susan



Luce Garden:

We are working hard on Luce to get it in prime shape again. We used to have 5 Volunteers who came every Wednesday and took care of everything. Some retired and some left us but the gardens go on. Jill and Gail have been heros in weeding, fighting the fire ants and cleaning up. Margaret is back with us and doing her usual excellent job. I was surprised last week when I rode by

and realized the first Susanqua Camellias were blooming. It won't be long until the Azaleas are budding up!



Camellia Sasanqua

Odds and Ends:

We are thrilled to have two more new Volunteers to share with you this month. Lisa Kelly and Frank Dugas. Lisa has been working where she was needed and Frank and Chuck partner in the clearing projects at present in the Memorial Arbor. A round of applause for both!



Lisa



Frank

With preparing for Fall, we could use Volunteers to help us put things in order as the season changes. Come join us at Mepkin Gardens! Contact Dennis



Nelson at MepkinAbbeyVolunteers@gmail.com

You can reach Dennis at 843-830-9349 (corrected from last month).

Thanks to Howard and Jimmy for their reports. My thanks to Sylvia, and Father Jonas for the photos.

Next month I will be reporting on the progress of the Memorial Arbor and ways to remember a loved one. We are working on a plan and hope to be well into site work as well as bringing water to the site. Hopefully this will hold your interest to see the progress as things are planted in November. Go to the Mepkin Website www.mepkinabbey.org to find out about purchasing a brick. We will have further information on remembering a loved one in our grove of trees or with a bench.

My trivia for the month:

“Scientists believe that the health benefits of exercising are boosted by being outside in a natural environment.”

Enjoy the cooler weather. Peace, dottie