MEPKIN ABBEY

Mepkin Abbey Garden Newsletter

July 2026

It's hot! No surprises there, right? Although the "feels like" temps are back in the triple digits we can be grateful that we've seen more rain in the last couple of weeks than we did in the last few months. Finding ways to beat the heat has always been part of the lifestyle here in the Lowcountry, but to those in other parts of the U.S. and around the world who aren't used to it and are struggling with deadly high temperatures, our hearts and prayers go out to them.

Somehow it always seems to be a bit cooler here on the grounds of Mepkin. Perhaps the shade of the old oaks, the lush green lawns, the breeze off the river, all come together to make it seem more tolerable. Or maybe our tolerance comes from our love of this sacred place and our appreciation not only for its natural beauty, but its man-made as well. Whatever the reason, this month's newsletter is an attempt to capture in some way the impressions made by the landscape and the garden spaces therein. Thanks so much to those who contributed their photos and helped that effort along.

-- LuAnne

Keeping Up the Good Work

Barb reports that the greenhouse has moved outside to the "nursery" for the summer. She explains:

> We have been starting perennials from seed, cuttings and divisions for the plant sale and the grounds. We now have a mobile potting set-up ***thanks to the donation of a wheelbarrow and potting stand from Jill and Keith Dalrymple***. This allows us to pot and move up plants in place and is a tremendous time and back saver. ***Thank you Jill & Keith. We will miss you as you move onto your next adventure.***

What's (cont'd)

A new sign greets visitors to Luce Garden and the surrounding area. Reminders to guests that this area is designated as a quiet zone have also been installed between the formal garden and the Columbarium.

What's (cont'd)

And it's nice to report that the new sod installed back in April appears to be doing quite well and looks wonderful.

What's (cont'd)

If you haven't seen them yet, check out the staghorn ferns Craig mounted and placed for sale at the store. According to the required conditions and maintenance tips found online, they don't appear to be very fussy and they love humidity! There are only five left so get yours before they are all gone.

Mepkin Volunteers Visit Our Lady of Gethsemani

In their recent travels, Greg and Jill, stopped by the first Cistercian monastery established in America, Our Lady of Gethsemani, which is located outside of Bardstown, Kentucky. There they watched a movie on the life of Gethsemani's monks and were able to attend the afternoon prayer service. In 1949, Gethsemani established a daughter house here that we all know and love as Mepkin Abbey.

Now Showing in the Abbey's Gardens

The hydrangeas in front of the store were grabbing the spotlight all through June.

<u>Showing (cont'd)</u>

A few raindrops on the clusters of flowers created a sense of coolness on a warm summer morning.

Showing (cont'd)

The Clerodendrum is in bloom in St. Clare. This interesting shrub spreads on suckers that form a "thicket" like you see here. It can be quite invasive if allowed to spread uncontrolled.

<u>Showing (cont'd)</u>

Despite the drawbacks of planting this shrub, the clusters of little flowers it produces can make it worthwhile.

Showing (cont'd)

The zinnias are having their day now in the raised beds at the Cloister. The showy gladiolus featured in last month's newsletter are done for the season, but these lovers of hot summers should be around until autumn.

<u>Showing (cont'd)</u>

The lilies and coneflowers are enjoying a little more space as well.

<u>Showing (cont'd)</u>

Ursula shared this photo of Br. Juan's rose which was in her words "at its perfect peak" on a Sunday morning recently.

<u>Showing (cont'd)</u>

And down at the Columbarium, clusters of the funnel-shaped flowers of Agapanthus swayed in the breeze.

By Special Arrangement

We thank Ursula once again for providing photos of the arrangements Fr. Guerric created for the church during the month of June and for a wonderful "bonus" photo at the end of this section.

Rudbeckia maxima (which goes by many different common names) can grow very tall. Keeping the stems long in this arrangement for June 7th helps us appreciate this flower's ability to tower above the rest.

<u>Arrangement (cont'd)</u>

Fr. Guerric brought the bounty of Mepkin's gardens together in this stunning arrangement for Sunday, June 21st.

<u>Arrangement (cont'd)</u>

Agapanthus and Farfugium come together in this wonderful arrangement for Sunday, June 28th.

Arrangement (cont'd)

Ursula took this photo of Fr. Guerric among the flowers in the raised beds. She commented that she thought "the picture says it all --that special place, that special quiet time."

A Visit to the Ravine

Nestled between the sites of two final resting places – the Columbarium and the Laurens' Family Cemetery – is a spot teeming with life at this time of the year.

Visit (cont'd)

A tiny creek fed by the river runs under the bridge that crosses the ravine. The lowest spot on the bridge is a great place to pause and take in all that surrounds it.

Visit (cont'd)

From the bottom of the ravine, you can catch a close-up look at the canna lilies and buckeye tree that grows there.

Visit (cont'd)

Here's a closer look at the fruits of the buckeye. Eventually the fruits will split open to expose three large nut-like, inedible seeds inside .

Visit (cont'd)

Out of reach for plucking, this six-foot-tall dandelion can testify to the lushness of the environment found in the ravine.

An Unexpected Encounter

The sight of hibiscus in bloom at the pond below the retreat center caused an unexpected pause in my journey to visit the ravine.

Encounter (cont'd)

Focusing on the "filigree work" done by insects to the leaves of the hibiscus, I totally missed the surprise waiting for me in the background. Do you see it?

<u>Encounter (cont'd)</u>

You can image my delight when I encountered this beautiful creature "reflecting" on its visit to Mepkin.

Perspective

Scenes of rural life are becoming far too rare in the Lowcountry, but in a little out of the way place at Mepkin – at a spot out by the African-American Cemetery – Craig had the presence of mind to snap this memorable photo.

Contemplating the Month Ahead

If you find it too hot to get out to any of the outdoor events commemorating the signing of the Declaration of Independence that took place 250 July 4ths ago, then consider, perhaps, a trip to the Charleston Museum to view their exhibits showcasing the roles that local residents played not only in America's fight for freedom, but in the founding of our nation as well.

In this exhibit, you will find Henry Laurens in the unfinished oil sketch by Benjamin West entitled *American Commissioners of the Preliminary Peace Agreement with Great Britain*. Henry is the fellow in the center of the painting in the rust-colored coat standing behind Benjamin Franklin.

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Whatever your personal plans are for July 4th or throughout the month, here's wishing you all a wonderful month ahead!