MEPKIN ABBEY

Mepkin Abbey Garden Newsletter

May 2026

April is usually a busy month at Mepkin for our wonderful crew of garden volunteers. Keeping the grounds looking their best for the increase of visitors to the Abbey is top priority and there is always much to do. Weather has been pleasantly Spring-like, but the ongoing drought has been great cause for concern. The end of the month brought an occasional shower to the area. There still is, however, a large deficit.

The most anticipated event in the month of April was the Annual Plant Sale which took place on April 11th. The event is a fun fund-raiser and a fantastic way to spend a Saturday in the company of some of the nicest and most dedicated people you will ever have the privilege to know. Photos and news of the event are included in this newsletter. Also, in this edition are some of the most gorgeous photos we've ever had in the newsletter. So many folks contributed to this one! It was an honor to bring all your photos together here for others to enjoy. What follows is a lovely photo journal of life as it unfolded at Mepkin Abbey during the month of April 2026.

-- LuAnne

Garden Volunteers Step into Springtime Mode

As the grass greened up, seasonal projects came about, and the Annual Plant Sale rolled around, volunteers and work crews stepped into familiar (and not so familiar) roles to get the job done.

Paul climbed atop his tractor again for another season of grass cutting.

Sylvia snapped this photo of Gators lined up outside the greenhouse ready to move plants to the site of the sale.

Volunteers (cont'd)

On Tuesday, April 21st, volunteers stepped up to assist with laying sod in a large bare area of the Cloister.

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

Joel brought the pallets in on a forklift and the men went about laying the rolls down.

Volunteers (cont'd)

Denny is seen here about to grab more sod.

And Chris has his next strip in hand.

Volunteers (cont'd)

Joel walks along pressing the sod to the ground while Craig continues to lay another row. Laying sod is a physically demanding job, but this crew proved they were equal to the task.

Scenes from the Annual Plant Sale – April 11, 2026

Shoppers were greeted by rows and rows of plants and filled their carts full of the bargains they encountered.

Sale (cont'd)

Those who came out to the sale early found a large variety of plants to take home to their gardens.

Sale (cont'd)

Staghorn ferns and hanging cacti were some of the unusual items for sale that shoppers snapped up very quickly.

Sale (cont'd)

Over 300 customers were served, more than $11,000 was raised, and we may have recruited more volunteers in just a few short hours.

Sale (cont'd)

Ed came out to the Plant Sale, and it was so nice to see him. A long-time garden volunteer, he has been recovering from surgery and has been greatly missed.

Sale (cont'd)

Barb Misner, whose second home is the greenhouse, is the guiding light behind Mepkin's Annual Plant Sale. She and her helpers spend months preparing for the big day. Well done, Barb and crew!!!!

Sale (cont'd)

Lots of volunteers were on hand to assist. Earl and John K. directed shoppers to parking spots during the event.

Sale (cont'd)

Craig and volunteers, David and Charlotte, were on hand bright and early to lend a hand and a smile.

Sale (cont'd)

It was a beautiful day, but Sylvia and Jill, like most of the workers, found that a light jacket was called for in the first hours.

Dan, however, warmed up quickly running cart loads of plant purchases to shoppers' cars.

Sale (cont'd)

Jill and Greg were on hand to speak with potential volunteers. Greg also assisted with technical issues like internet access for card sales. They also conducted a tour of the Church tour during the sale.

Sale (cont'd)

Linda and Gail served as cashiers again this year and John R. once again volunteered to tally the purchases for shoppers.

Gloria, in the hat and sunglasses, has served as a plant sale volunteer two years in a row. On April 21st she joined the Tuesday crew to become a regular volunteer. Glad to have you, Gloria!

Sale (cont'd)

Colleen, Ann, Susan, and Gloria gathered around Gail as the end of the sale approached and the pace slowed down a bit.

It's such a privilege to be able to come together in this way with fellow volunteers. Ann, Colleen, Susan, Linda, LuAnne, and Gail gathered close for a group photo to capture the feel-good moment.

Sale (cont'd)

Rows of empty tables and shelves attest to the great success of this year's Plant Sale.

By Special Arrangement

The newsletter would not be complete without Ursula's photos of the flowers on display in the Church on Sundays.

Pots of multi-colored hydrangeas welcomed worshippers on April 19th.

On Sunday, April 26th, simple pots of bright yellow flowers (perhaps a type of Chrysanthemum?) greeted those attending the service.

Spring Blossoms Make an Impressive Show in the Gardens

This nicely composed photo was taken by Craig at the crossroads on April 1st. It's the perfect spot to begin your stroll (or should I say scroll) through the remainder of this month's newsletter.

Gardens (cont'd)

This shot of azaleas against a bright blue sky was also taken by Craig on April 1st. Captured at the peak of bloom time, the delicate flowers had faded to a mere memory a week later.

Gardens (cont'd)

Azaleas have graced Lowcountry gardens since the mid-1800s, and this one looks right at home in this shady spot where the graves date to the 18th and 19th centuries. Thanks, Craig, for another great photo.

Gardens (cont'd)

The hard to miss irises blooming across the street from the Plant Sale seemed to shout for someone to come take their picture.

This blossom proudly posed for a close-up. This type of iris gets its name from the furry little beard that lies atop the downward petals.

Gardens (cont'd)

Fr. Francis' azaleas are one of the most striking of any of the varieties blooming at the Abbey. Much thanks to Gail for sharing this photo.

The fringe tree in St. Clare bloomed for only a brief time but still managed to create quite a bit of interest.

Gardens (cont'd)

The small flowers that dangle from the fringe tree are called panicles and are often described as "fleecy" or like "small beards." In the landscape or a garden space, fringe trees pair well with azaleas.

Gardens (cont'd)

Plants bloomed profusely in the Cloister as well during April. Ursula shares this photo of roses standing tall by Our Lady.

And Br. Jonas shared a snapshot of the azaleas along the walkway to the Church.

Spotlight on the Wild Side of Mepkin

We have Colleen to thank for this photo of the beautiful creature she encountered in early April.

Wild (cont'd)

Paul came upon this less than cuddly creature sunning itself on the banks of one of the ponds at Luce Garden during the Plant Sale.

Marianne came upon the 'gator sunbathing again on Friday, April 24th.

Wild (cont'd)

Here's another great photo from Craig of a busy bee gathering nectar from one of the thousands of blossoms around Mepkin.

Wild (cont'd)

And thanks to Fr. Jonas for sharing these awesome photos of the little buzzers harvesting nectar from more azalea blooms.

Wild (cont'd)

And two more delightful photos of our wild friends from Fr. Jonas. Can you see the cute little reptile among the leaves of rosemary?

Back at the Farm

Across from the garden volunteers breakroom/tool shed is a field that the Monastery leases to farmers who in the past planted crops like corn or cotton. The most recent crop grown in the field appears to be feed for animals. The big rolls generated quite a bit of interest and a few photographs for the newsletter as well.

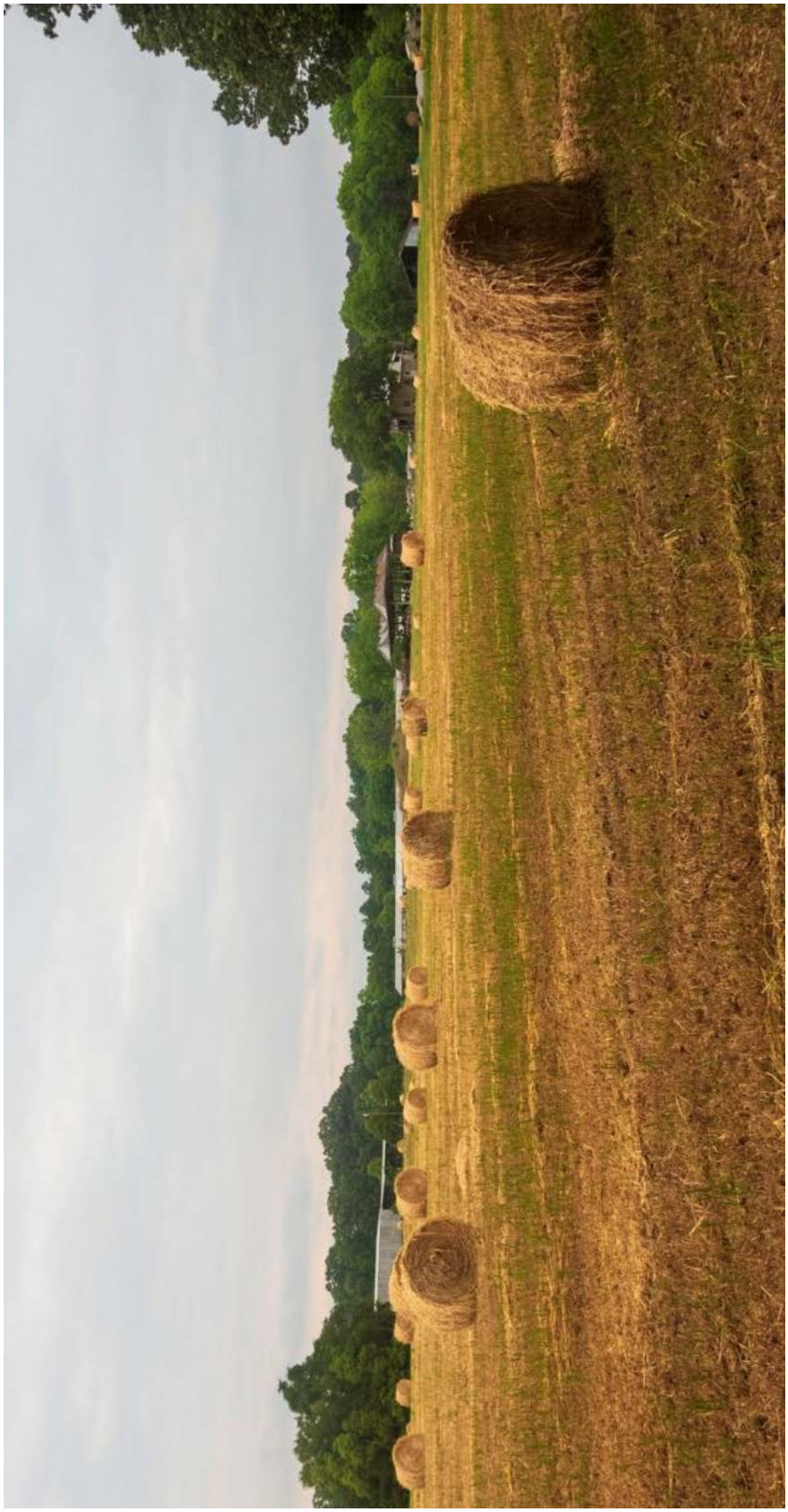
Sylvia provided this close-up shot of one of the many rolls that were formed during harvesting.

Farm (cont'd)

Sylvia also provided this wider view of the field that includes in the foreground a piece of equipment used in the harvest.

Jill Ewell's photo shows the rows formed in the field by the harvesting. All these photos bring to mind some of the history of the Abbey. In the 1950s, the monks operated a dairy farm at this site.

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



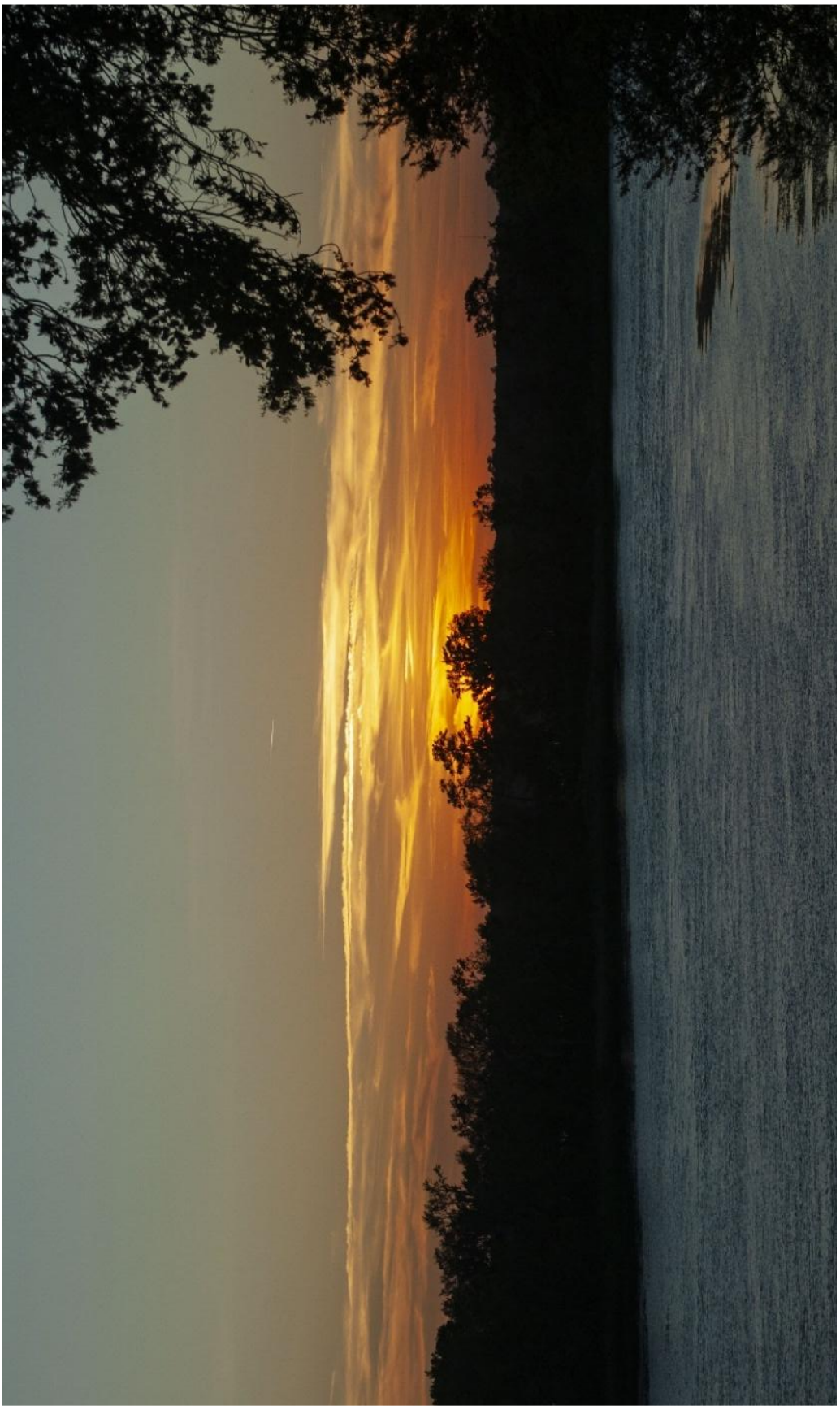
You will need to rotate your device slightly to fully appreciate Paul Meyer's panoramic shot that he calls "Rolls of Oats."

The River at Sunset

For those who have not had the opportunity to be on the grounds of Mepkin in the evening, you will no doubt also appreciate Paul Meyer's photos of the Cooper River taken from the bluff on April 4th.

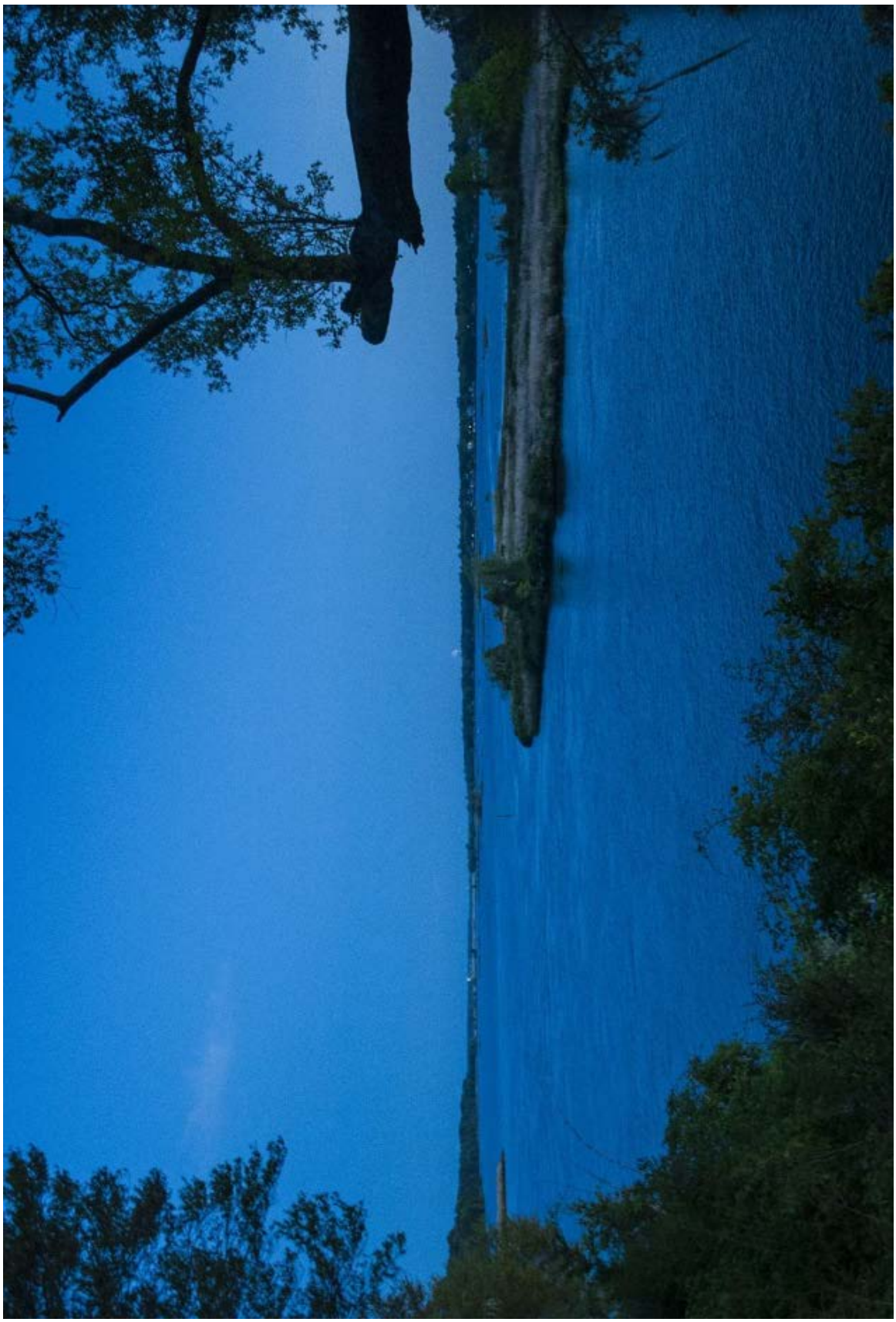
But, again, to truly appreciate the panoramic beauty he captured, scroll to the next page and turn your device sideways.

River (cont'd)



Paul pointed his Nikon upstream toward the sunset and captured the sun sinking behind a layer of clouds.

River (cont'd)



This shot was taken looking downstream. Paul regrets he could not stay just 20 minutes longer to get a photograph of the night sky.

Contemplating the Month Ahead

Mothers' Day and Memorial Day will likely be on the minds of a lot of folks this month . Mom's special day happens on May 10th this year and Memorial Day will be observed on May 25th. Visits with family and vacations planned around these dates in May will certainly be something to look forward to.

Something to keep in mind always is that you truly need to be careful out there when you are working. Mepkin is such a beautiful place that it's easy for us to forget that we may encounter a wild animal or insects that will defend themselves if provoked or feel threatened. Use caution and carefully survey your surroundings as you approach the areas where you will be working.

And, finally, if you have news or photos you would like to appear in the next newsletter, you can email me directly or send them to:

mepkingardenvolunteers@gmail.com.

Plant Sale volunteers found a nice spot to wind down as the end of the event drew near.