

Stroll through the labyrinth; recapture your youth



Throughout the ages, legends of restorative springs have stirred people to seek ways to recapture their youth and restore their vitality. The inverse relationship between stress and youthfulness is well known, as recent research shows that the effects of stress contribute to premature aging.

It's no wonder that people travel the world in search of the perfect, relaxing oasis where they can move out of a stressed

state and toward a state of relaxation and well-being. But the occasional holiday escape isn't enough to break the cycle of stress and restore the vitality lost to the demands of modern life.

More than ever, people are in need of restorative space at home, where they can momentarily retreat from the outside world and sip from their own personal fountain of youth. Therefore,

homeowners are now working with their land to create sacred space, gardens, and meditation features in response to an increasing need to develop a space for relaxation, contemplation, and an escape from stress.

For some, an alternative to an expensive vacation is to create a permanent retreat that they can enjoy every day. These private sanctuaries go beyond ordinary backyard gardens, combining

common garden elements to create uncommon restorative and sacred space. Gardens might include shade trees, evergreens, perennials, vegetables, herbs, and flowers. Other features include stones, walkways, seating, fire pits, water features, and possibly space for dining and entertaining, extending the living space into nature.

One example of a backyard landscape project is the meditation garden, designed with a circular labyrinth as a focal point. Labyrinths have become a form of meditation for stress reduction and self-reflection, and even people who find meditation difficult often enjoy walking the

labyrinth.

Unlike a common maze, which is designed to lose and confuse anyone who enters, the labyrinth has a single, non-branching path that carries one circuitously to the center of a geometric pattern, most often a circle, so there are no tricks to it and no dead ends. Labyrinths, with their spiral paths, are universal symbols of growth and the journey to wholeness.

For some, a stroll through a labyrinth may offer a path to the fountain of youth. “The labyrinth helps me find my way,” says Laura Esculcas, who left a high tech career in Silicon Valley and became a Veriditas-certified labyrinth facilitator specializing

in labyrinth and sacred site retreats near her home in Lisbon, Portugal, “Walking the labyrinth engages my linear, analytical mind in following the path, allowing me space to engage my intuitive, creative side in problem solving. I walk the labyrinth to restore my perspective. It reminds me to face life’s challenges one step at a time. The labyrinth restores my energy and helps me release stress, loosen up, and return to my center.”

Labyrinths have appeared throughout history as a universal and essential symbol of integration, harmony, and transformation. Labyrinths are found around the globe – in petroglyphs in Galicia,



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Morocco, Goa and the American Southwest, in rock circles in northern Europe, in pottery from ancient Syria, in Roman mosaics and ancient carvings in Italy and Greece, and in the ancient coins of Crete. The most ancient labyrinth design, the Classical Labyrinth, dates back over 5000 years.

The meandering path of the labyrinth spirals to the center of the circle and engages both body and mind in the logical progression of walking the path, which calms the flow of stressful thoughts that disrupt meditation and relaxation. Janel Joseph, a business consultant and executive coach in Austin, Texas, believes her labyrinth provides “a calming space that helps ground the landscape and its inhabitants. It fosters unity with nature and allows creativity to flow. I use my labyrinth as a meditation space and a place for guidance.”

The labyrinth serves as an archetypal blueprint, which has recently emerged as a modern spiritual tool that transcends any single ideological, philosophical,

or religious system of belief. Recent fascination with the labyrinth has resulted in more labyrinths being built during the last thirty years than at any known time in the past.

“People come to walk the labyrinth at the farm for many reasons,” says Pam Clark when asked about the 55-foot Spiral Ankh labyrinth installed at Dimond Hill Farm, New Hampshire. Pam, who runs her educational consulting business out of the farm, continues, “Some come to pray for healing for their loved ones, some seeking guidance for difficulties in their lives, some expressing gratitude for the blessings in their lives, and some offering themselves to service. The labyrinth ministers to all of them.”

A journey to the center of a labyrinth is a liberating experience and may lead one to a sense of wholeness, making the labyrinth an ideal addition to a home garden sanctuary.

The range of possibilities when creating a backyard sanctuary

and sacred space are unlimited. Sacred space takes many forms, resonating with the patterns that underlie creation and renewing vitality. From stone circles to lush private gardens, sacred space is the point where the finite and the infinite meet, like the fabled garden of the fountain of youth.

In her book *Healing Gardens*, Romy Rawlings point out how “our gardens, no matter their size play a vital supporting role, affording release from the pressures of the outside world and helping to create a sense of personal fulfillment.” By turning your home landscape into a private sanctuary and sacred space, you can access your own restorative fountain of vitality, well being, and richness of life.

In the words of American naturalist John Burroughs, “I go to nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in tune once more.”

From more information about labyrinths, visit www.earthshamans.com.