

Greenwood Herbals

March 2006

What's happening at Greenwood Herbals in March:

- **Starting the seedlings**
- **Writing and Writing and more writing....**



Here at Greenwood Herbals we have a labyrinth and I have been getting a lot of questions about it. Not only are the people who walk through our doors asking questions but I have been receiving a lot of e-mail with questions too. I decided that this would be a good month to write about the labyrinth, as nothing much is going on around here besides the care of all the little seedlings sitting under grow lights. There seems to be so much to say that books have been written on the subject. My favorite book is *Walking a Sacred Path* by Dr. Lauren Artress. If you are interested in Labyrinths I suggest you read this book. It is excellent. So as I'm limited to the space contained in this newsletter. I have devoted this entire newsletter to the subject.

What is a labyrinth? A labyrinth is an ancient meditation tool, used for thousands of years to help people quiet the mind. It is not attached to any particular religion, faith or tradition, but has been found all over the world throughout the ages. The labyrinth is not a new aged magical thing, but in reality is thousands of years old. It is a space where people have found peace and healing.

It is not a maze. There is only one entrance and one path that leads to the center of the labyrinth and back out again. Mazes are multicursal, with many paths, dead ends, cul-de-sacs and have several entrances and exits. A maze is a riddle to be solved. A labyrinth is a path to be walked. When walking a labyrinth the walker must concentrate on following the path beneath their feet. According to the book, "*Walking a Sacred Path*" by Dr. Lauren Artress, labyrinths have been known to the human race for more than 4,000 years. They can be found in every religion, from the Jewish Kabbala, the Hopi Medicine Wheel, in pagan rituals of

the ancient Greeks and Romans, and in the Christian Cathedrals in Europe. Labyrinths come in different shapes and sizes. From the circular ones in Scandinavia to the square classical labyrinths of the Hopi. In France the labyrinth at the Chartres Cathedral was laid into the cathedral floor sometime around 1220 and is one of the few remaining labyrinths from the middle ages. This labyrinth has eleven concentric circles, the path meandering throughout the entire circle. Christians of the Middle Ages used them as an expression of the Christian faith. The single path to the center was a perfect example of a single path to salvation. Christians were required to make a pilgrimage of faith to Jerusalem; but this was too dangerous and expensive. So the church designated certain cathedrals through out Europe as pilgrimage cathedrals and Christians would travel to them and then walk the labyrinths to make their pilgrimage. The Chartres Cathedral was one such designated church.

The labyrinth at Greenwood Herbals is based on the Circular Classical Seven-Circuit Labyrinth. The style of this labyrinth is found all over Sweden and Finland. For years a very good friend of mine, Anne Dickerson and I would visit labyrinths around Maine and New Hampshire to walk the sacred path. I wanted to build a labyrinth here at Greenwood. It was so important to my vision of what Greenwood was all about. Healing. It was around this time that Anne went to France with her brother and his family and was able to walk the Chartres Labyrinth. I was so excited for her. When Anne got back we started to make plans to build one here. But where to start? We noticed a workshop on labyrinths at an adult community learning center. We signed up and took the workshop. How I wanted the design of the Chartres Labyrinth. I had visions of medicinal plants lining the paths. A sacred place of healing. The first thing we learned in this workshop was that the earth contains energy lines that are called ley lines. This is a science all in itself involving geometry. Dowsers find these ley lines all the time when dowsing for water. We had to find some dowsing rods or make our own. I found a company in Vermont who sell these rods. They were here within a week. So Anne and I started preparations to build a Labyrinth at Greenwood. We would outline it the day before and have friends, family and other herbalists in New England come and help us build it the next day. Anne and I began to draw the labyrinth on top of the earth. using dowsing rods and stones until the cross and four dots were placed. We then connected them with flour until the paths were formed.

To my amazement it was a seven-circuit labyrinth. Not the Chartres that I so wanted. Alright, I could still line it with the plants that I wanted. That night it began to rain. The flour was washed away until all we had left was a faint white line. This was not going to work. Some ask, why didn't you use paint? It was not an organic option for me. So we asked everyone to bring rocks to help us outline it. Each person brought a special rock or stone from their own property, to help outline the paths. In the weeks and months that followed, more and more people came and added their own rocks, writing on them, letting us know where they had come from and placing them in the labyrinth. There is now no room for the plants that I had envisioned and though the labyrinth was planned and designed by Anne and me, it was built and created by others. I have always used the labyrinth to access a place within me that is covered up by chatter and noise of everyday existence. It is a place to connect to spirit within me. Some people tell me that they come and just ask a question and use the labyrinth to access their unconscious mind. By the time they reach the center they have their answer. Others use it for prayer, and others for giving thanks. Some use it for healing, bringing their illness. Many gifts have been left in the labyrinth along with the rocks. Tobacco, corn, shells, gemstones, jewelry. All personal gifts from each walkers heart.



People ask me what do I do when I'm in there? What are the rules? There are no rules. This is a personal rite. But there are some things that may help. When stepping into the labyrinth, enter with no expectations. Say a prayer or an affirmation. The walk to the center is the time of letting go of thoughts or what we call, the chattering mind. At the center we have arrived and this can be different for each person and most likely different each time one person takes the walk. Walking out of the labyrinth is a process of preparing to come back to the world and noticing what the quiet mind has to say. Once leaving the labyrinth, it is a good time to reflect on this experience and to give thanks.

Whether one is speaking of a Holy Temple, Church, a Native American Medicine Wheel, or the Labyrinth, sacred space is a place where one can go to enhance the contact one has with the spiritual. Our labyrinth is open to the public. We usually close it during December through April, due to the heavy amount of snow. But this year, it has remained open and many are still walking the single path.

Announcements: See our web-site for future events.

- We are now accepting applications for our apprenticeship program. See our web-site www.greenwoodherbals.com for more details and the application form. The completed forms must be submitted by March 30, 2006
- We are now accepting Visa and Mastercard at the shop.
- Sharon Deill Degiovanni will be conducting a *Free* one day art show "A Journey with Trees" with Pat Trotter of Earth Spirit Voices on Saturday, March 18, 2006 at Misty Meadows Herbal Center, from 10—4 pm. For more information call (603)659-7211 or visit www.mistymeadows.org. To preview Sharon's art you can also visit www.theroot-seller.com You can find out more about Pat Trotter at www.landreader.com
- We have applications in the office for the Lichenwood Flower Essence apprenticeship program. If you are interested, please ask for one the next time you come in or visit www.lichenwoodherbals.com to access it on-line.

Greenwood Herbals will be closed April 23rd thru April 29. I will be on vacation. If you need anything from the shop or If you are ordering on-line, or by phone please keep this in mind. All orders placed between April 23rd and April 29th will be shipped on May 3, 2006.