

Home & Design



Browse 200,000+ Home & Design Photos DIY Home Improvement Tips Ginny Smith on Gardening

EMAIL PRINT FONT SIZE COMMENTS Recommend 1

Posted: Thu, Feb. 23, 2012, 5:00 AM

Labyrinths designed to encourage reflection

Melissa Kossler Dutton The Associated Press

When Carol Maurer has a lot on her plate, she finds it useful to visit the labyrinth made of river rocks at the Delaware Art Museum, in Wilmington.

"It quiets my mind," said Maurer, who lives in Hockessin, Del. "It sets the path for me so I can spiral inward."

Labyrinths, which have been constructed for thousands of years, have become a popular addition to hospitals, gardens and public institutions.

With a single path in and out, labyrinths are designed to encourage reflection. They differ from mazes, which are designed as puzzles. Labyrinths have been associated with religions and cultures throughout the world.

The number of labyrinths in the United States has been steadily increasing for about 15 years, said Robert Ferre, a labyrinth builder who founded Labyrinth Enterprises.

"Nowadays they're so widespread, it's more about how to best utilize them than what they are," he said from San Antonio, Texas.

When he started the business in 1995, churches were his primary customers. Labyrinths were an important feature of European Roman Catholic churches in the Middle Ages; walking one was a devotional activity and represented a spiritual journey.

The most famous remaining labyrinth from that period is at Chartres Cathedral, near Paris. Many newer labyrinths are based on the Chartres pattern.

They can be constructed of turf or stone or painted on pavement.

Today, labyrinths are widely used in secular spaces too, said Maurer, who serves on the board of The Labyrinth Society, an organization dedicated to using and promoting the paths. She helped get the labyrinth built near the sculpture garden at the Delaware Art Museum.

"People are looking for ways to travel inward," she said. "They're trying to find a deeper connection with themselves that may be spiritual but not necessarily religious."

It's even possible for homeowners to build labyrinths themselves in their yard, with rock, gravel or mulch, Ferre said. Plans are available online or through his company.

Patricia Cadle, the oncology chaplain at N.C. Cancer Hospital in Chapel Hill, N.C., encourages patients, family members and hospital employees to walk a labyrinth.

The medical facility dedicated an outdoor labyrinth in 2009, and just completed an indoor one this



AP

A labyrinth at the Allegany College of Maryland in Cumberland. Designed to have a single path in and out, labyrinths create opportunities for reflection. (AP Photo/Allegany College of Maryland)

1 of 3 View images

Post a comment

RELATED STORIES

How does your garden entertain? Great design plant: Golden Creeping Jenny

YOU MIGHT ALSO ENJOY...

- Making It: One-of-a kind books Durability and style for a rec center Kindred knitters online and off. Auctions: Ancient armor, including full suit, to be sold Portfolio: The how-tos of growing herbs Time to...buy onion sets Your Place: Why dishwashers are turning out cloudy glasses Antiques/Art/Crafts Houzz Tour: French farmhouse style in Pa. Plenty of ambition at Awbury Arboretum Browse 200,000+ inspirational home design photos

Advertise Here

fresh voices of living



CAROLYN HAX Relationship imperiled by distant 'dream job'



DEAR ABBY Dear Abby: As host, hubby's lack of hospitality shows in his menu



VIRGINIA A. SMITH Plenty of ambition at Awbury Arboretum

Latest Blog Posts

- Philly Dawg: 700 cats seized at Fla. 'sanctuary' featured on Colbert Report - 7:37pm Healthy Kids : Baseball season, video games and more - 12:56pm Green Living: Vitali hearing now: Marcellus shale and air emissions - 10:00am The Public's Health: How to turn 'What's wrong with you?' into 'What happened to you?' - 02/26/2012 Al's Place: Ask Al with Alan J. Heavens - 02/24/2012

More blogs >>

most POPULAR

VIEWED SHARED

- Fired cop is back Phil Sheridan: Don't rule out Reid taking long view with Griffin Dan Gross: Mayor talked Fox 29 out of airing bowling-alley spanking video, sources say Snow, sleet to make midweek messy? Eagles' linebacker draft possibilities Don't expect a rush at NHL trade deadline If the Eagles want to trade up... Actress Sean Young arrested at post-Oscars party Eagles may find a couple of choices at linebacker Inside the Phillies: Can Pierre steal a roster spot? More Most Viewed Berenstain Bears co-creator Jan Berenstain dies Dan Gross: Mayor talked Fox 29 out of airing bowling-alley spanking video, sources say Fired cop is back Phil Sheridan: Don't rule out Reid taking long view with Griffin Tickets available Thursday for rare Italian art show at Michener Museum Judge: Won't dismiss charges against Msgr. Lynn Obsession with winning crowds out useful

month (February).

"It's a great tool for meditation and relaxation," Cadle said.

"Labyrinths can help connect the mind, the body and the spirit. I think we can use that when we're dealing with disease."

Allgany College of Maryland in Cumberland built a labyrinth in 2005 as part of its integrative health program, which focuses on holistic approaches to healing. The walking path has become widely used on campus, said Cherie Snyder, a professor and director with the program.

"Many of the faculty here have incorporated it into their teaching," she said.

The community, initially unsure of the labyrinth, also has put it to good use, she said.

"A lot of times people think it's a religious cult," she said. But once area residents understood the labyrinth's history, they began to visit. Cancer support groups, church groups and organizations that serve the developmentally disabled have all used the labyrinth, Snyder said.

"It's just been a wonderful tool to introduce people to walking meditation, walking prayer and communing with nature," she said.

Many users feel a labyrinth inspires creativity, said Katja Marquart, a member of The Labyrinth Society and an associate professor of interior architecture at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. She has encouraged graduate students to walk a labyrinth to help them sort out their work.

"They always came back with really great insights," she said.

And walking a labyrinth does not have to be a solo endeavor, said Amy Morgan, a homeless services coordinator for The Salvation Army's Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center in Ashland, Ohio, which has a labyrinth on its grounds. To build a sense of community, Morgan walks through it with a women's group she leads.

"As you walk, you are able to release what you need to release. You go back out prepared to reenter the world," said JoAnn Shade, corps officer for the Salvation Army facility. "You get a sense of, what do I believe and who am I."

Online:

<http://labyrinthociety.org/>

Copyright 2012 The Associated Press.

Recommend

One person recommends this. Be the first of your friends.

MORE FROM PHILLY.COM

Buffett says he was 'dead wrong' on housing market

Steve and Mia: Her hubby has turned morning sex...

A real loss for Atlantic City

"Safe House": A spy formula, worked hard and well

Life behind bars for Tepper, but with a pension - Philly.com

Harry Potter e-books coming to schools, libraries

MORE FROM THE WEB

World's Greatest Retirement Lie Dupes Baby Boomers *(Newsmax.com)*

U.S. stops minting unloved \$1 coins *(Bankrate.com)*

Florida: Beach Scenes - Photo Tour *(Away.com)*

7 Ugly Houses: Love Them or Hate Them? *(HouseLogic)*

Chinese carmaker blatantly copies Ford F-150 *(Autoblog)*

Are Grocery Store Self-Service Checkouts Over? *(iVillage)*

[\[what's this\]](#)

[Sign in to post a comment](#)

Comments

0 comments

Register to comment

Why are we asking you to register? We've made some changes to increase the quality of the user experience and dialogue, and reduce the number of inappropriate or offensive posts. You're now required to have a registered username and account before adding a comment. This will improve the experience for everyone. We apologize for the inconvenience.

Join the conversation!

[SIGN UP NOW](#)

Already Registered? Sign In

Email address

Password

[SIGN IN](#)

[Forgot Password?](#)

lessons

Allentown woman shows Harrisburg how to make a legislative map

Experimental Drug Shows Promise Against Type 2 Diabetes

Greater involvement by community and staff fills gaps at Phila. school

[» More Most Emailed](#)

today's PHILLY.COM POLL

Will one-time donations that saved the Catholic schools be enough to keep them open long-term?

- No, hasn't solved declining enrollment problem
- Yes, Archdiocese will work harder given impressive community support
- No, not without school vouchers
- Yes, private donors would step up again

Vote

View results

TODAY'S PHILLY.COM VIDEOS



Down the Shore girl headed for the beach, The Gossip
Dan Sharp | MLB Fan Cave 2012
Gordon Mack | MLB Fan Cave 2012
Good Life Guru: Menu labeling
Schmidt to work with Phillies' hitters
[More videos »](#)

PHILLY.COM PROMOTIONS

Philly.com Contests
Philadelphia Deals
Philadelphia Visitors Guide
Philadelphia Restaurants
Philadelphia Sports
Buy Phillies Tickets
Buy Eagles Tickets

latest PHOTO GALLERIES



Underdogs is here
Phillies Spring Traing, 2/27.
Phillies Spring Training
Vanity Fair Oscar Party
The 84th Annual Academy Awards
Oscars Red Carpet

Philly.com: [News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Business](#) | [What's Happening](#) | [Restaurants & Food](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Living](#) | [Marketplace](#) | [Jobs](#)

Site Services: [Advertise on Philly.com](#) | [View print ads and special sections](#) | [Mobile Edition](#) | [Apps](#) | [News In Education](#)

The Inquirer: [The Inquirer Digital](#) | [Columns](#) | [Subscriber Services](#)

Daily News: [Daily News Digital](#) | [Columns](#) | [Subscriber Services](#)

Classifieds: [Jobs](#) | [Cars on AutoTrader.com](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Rentals](#) | [Marketplace](#) | [Celebrations](#)

Partners: [Phrequency](#) | [Philadelphia City Paper](#) | [Philly Dealyo](#) | [Taste of Philadelphia](#) | [Parade Magazine](#)

Local Services: [Mattress Factory](#) | [Floors USA](#)

[About Philly.com](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Terms of Use & Privacy Statement](#) | Copyright 2012
[Latest News Feed](#)  [RSS](#)  [All RSS Feeds](#) [RSS Terms of Use](#)