



## Labyrinth completed with serenity

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— The recent rains may have slowed motorists and postponed numerous outdoor activities, but Chandor Gardens is loving the precipitation.

A new project for the gardens was completed this week.

Horticulturist Steven Chamblee, the project's creator, named it "Labyrinth."

The design appears to be a maze, but should not be confused with one.

"A maze is a puzzle you're supposed to figure out," Chamblee said. "You can't get lost in a labyrinth."

He added the project started out pretty simple, but with no funds.

He wanted to make improvements to Chandor Gardens without modernizing it outside of Douglas Chandor's form.

"It's a complex thing," Chamblee said. "I wanted to update the gardens, but it had to be timeless. Something Chandor could have and might have done."

Chamblee strategically placed a string in the center of the scholar stone, (Douglas Chandor referred to it as the stone of the immortals), located in the old parking lot.

He spray painted a mark on the string every three feet, then marked a pattern in light yellow paint on the ground where the labyrinth would lie.

He said he could not draw the design on paper because it defied the logic of the project.

He said the labyrinth has no religious or pagan meaning, but was designed so spectators could experience it as a place of meditation, to seek introspection and enlightenment.

He placed himself in a peaceful candle lit environment, lingering with incense to begin his project, which took a month to complete. After hours, when no patrons were in the gardens to distract him, he designed Labyrinth with Toby Mize, Chandor gardener.

Chamblee said Mize “innately understood from the beginning the relevance of the project.”

“Some people want to pigeon-hole a labyrinth,” Chamblee said. “Toby understood the goal was to create a place of peace and meditation.”

Although working on the Labyrinth in August was hot, dusty and physically brutal, Chamblee said Mize brought enthusiasm and optimism to it every day.

The pathway is made of crushed granite, outlined in Thurber bricks — 1,205 of them.

Chamblee said it was difficult to find them, but wanted to use them because Douglas Chandor did throughout the gardens, and he desired to keep the theme alive.

The city street department had a pile of Thurber bricks left over from a recent project. The remnants were stored at the pipe yard.

With permission, Chamblee sorted through the pile, choosing the perfect ones. In order to make the creation a spiritual journey, Nyoka Johnson of the Master Gardeners, mentioned the need to her employer, Julie Wrigley, who made a donation of \$1,500 in the name of the Burns Foundation.

Pete Carroll donated the remaining gravel to complete the design. Encore Azaleas, in Loxley, Ala., donated 276 azaleas to the gardens, which now line the mossy stone wall framing the Labyrinth.

Chamblee completed the project late Thursday evening.

He said he wanted to finish before the rain halted his work.

“I stayed up here until 11 p.m. until it was complete,” Chamblee said.

The journey begins with an arrow rock formation pointing out the path. Where does it end? Well, you’ll have to visit Chandor Gardens to see.