



By Phillipa Rutherford

WISE WOMEN HEALING

Weed salads from a healing garden are an integral part of lunch at Chandrakirti Centre in Nelson, New Zealand. PHILLIPA RUTHERFORD reports.

Set among picturesque rolling hills with a view to the mountains, Chandrakirti Tibetan Buddhist Centre has trees, and flower, herb and vegetable gardens spread over its two acres of lawn. We run herbal classes, teaching people how to identify and use local plants for food and healing. We make herbal ointments, teas, tinctures and vinegars and educate our visitors in the ways of natural living.

The gardens compete with chicory, dandelion, fennel and kale for space. Calendulas abound in the spring as does

plantain, chickweed, motherwort, a variety of mints and dozens of other wonderful nourishing plants.

The herb gardens are teaching areas, where folk are encouraged to be part of their own healing by reconnecting with the earth and the elements. We call our herbal healing business *Wise Women Healing*. Karen Neame and I make remedies to sell; we see private clients offering treatments in naturopathy, herbal remedies, massage, Bach flowers and life skills education.

Large rockeries full of flowering perennials with a spacious deck and lawn area flourish in the front garden. It's like being in a pure land – the grounds are so lush and full of flowers and beauty. We have been part of local garden trails where the public can come to view and enjoy the place.

The whole property is managed organically, with a view to educating and encouraging people to honor their connection to the earth and all things living. Now we are setting up a universal education program integrating the earth, food, and healing with children, youth and women as our target market. Of course, men can come to our *Wise Women Healing Centre*, but it's the women who run it!

The garden is a wonderful place to illustrate the nature of cyclic existence and the passing of time, birth, sickness, old age and death. It is easy to see these forces in action in nature, in every plant life cycle.

People come to the center for many reasons and the garden provides a very grounded way of introducing the action-orientated people (or doers) to the Buddhist philosophy. Avoiding killing is always a gardening issue and generosity is fostered. Caring for the earth and an awareness of our surroundings is a positive and fun way to cultivate mindfulness, something that has universal appeal to young and old alike. ☸



Chandrakirti's magnificent garden



Phillipa Rutherford is a joint director (with Bruce Farley) of Chandrakirti Tibetan Buddhist Meditation Centre in the south island of New Zealand.

