

I'm not very good at making tutorials, nor is my map creation way very good to create super realistic maps. I also skip many steps of my map creation method to simply show the very basics. You may hate how I'm doing these kinds of maps, but I like creating maps with this method.

This is also first gimp related tutorial I've made. You may share this pdf file or .zip file - if you want to, just give me the credit for it :)

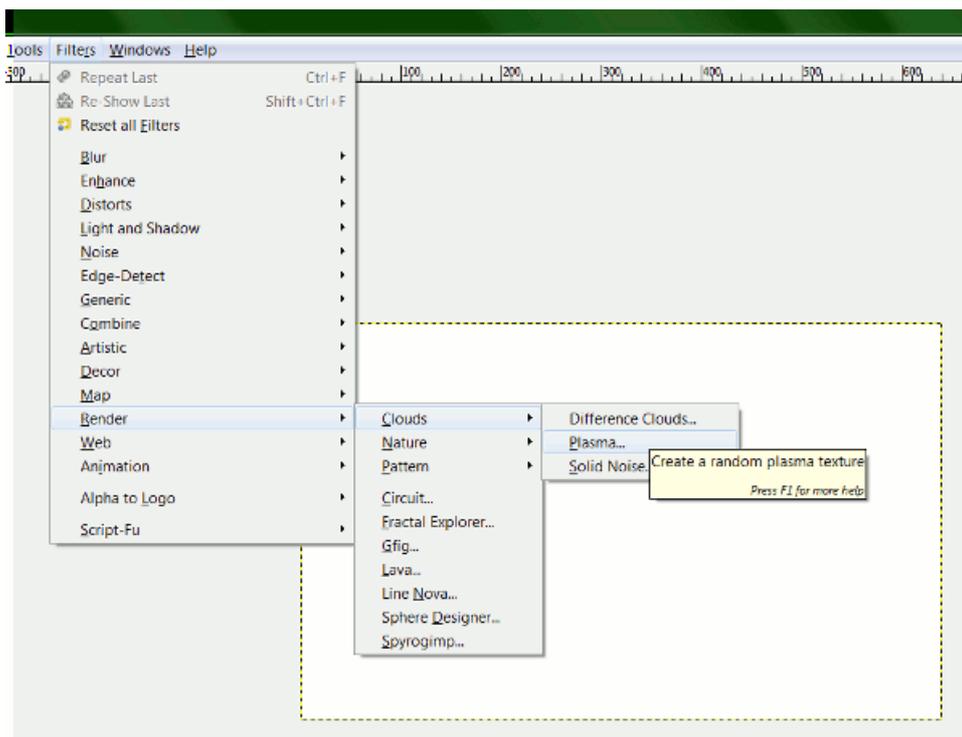
I expect that you know how to:

- * Basics of how to use Lasso, box select, Magic wand and Select by Color tools
- * Access menus
- * Save (Ctrl + S and/or CTRL + Shift + S)
- * That you can not directly show .xcf files to others and need to use common image extension for that (jpg, gif, png)
- * Use pencil/eraser/paintbrush/bucket fill tools
- * (Understanding how different layers work is good as well)

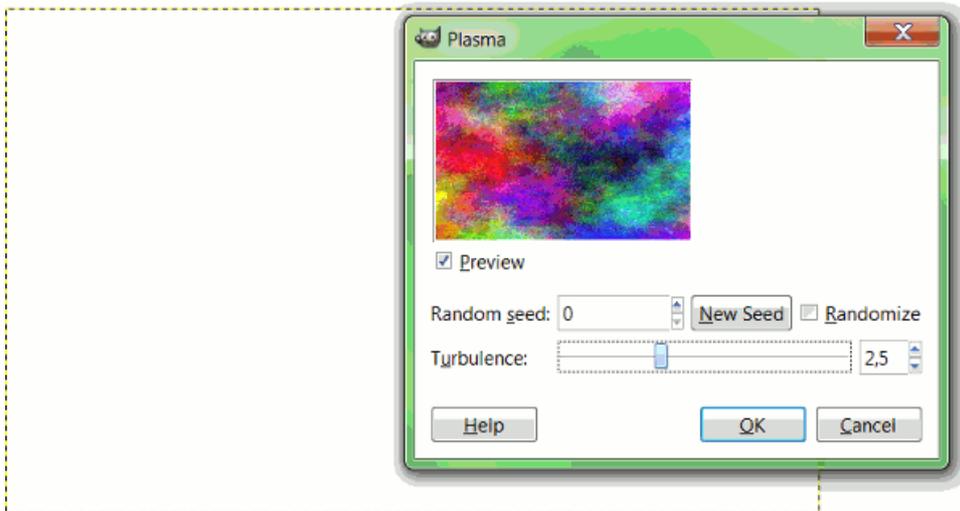
– Northen Wolf
 @ Civfanatics

1. File → New → Select the size of the map you wish to create, in my case it's 640 x 400, but for normal maps it should be at very least 1200 x 800 pixels

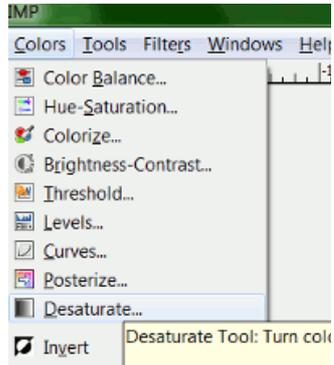
2. Select Filters → Render → Plasma



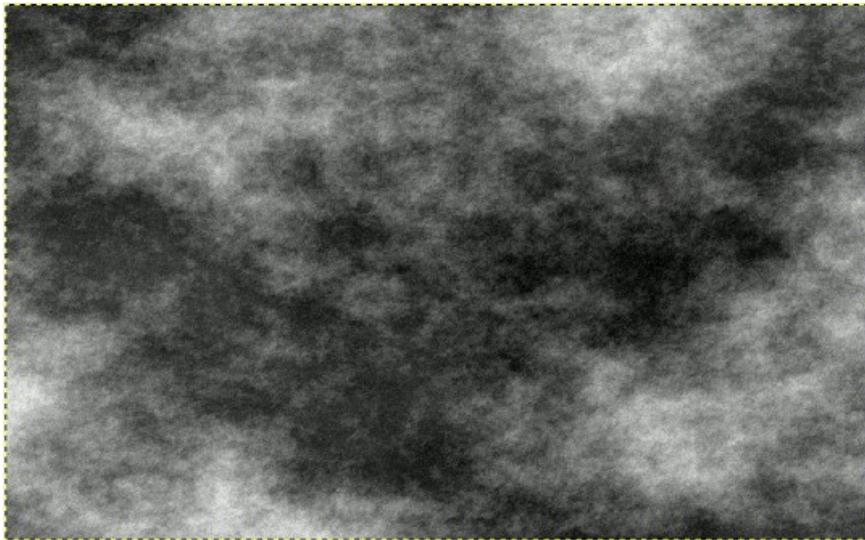
More turbulence gives more random colors, which is better. I used 2.5, but I would have used more for real map creation.



4. Next select Desaturate from Colors → Desaturate

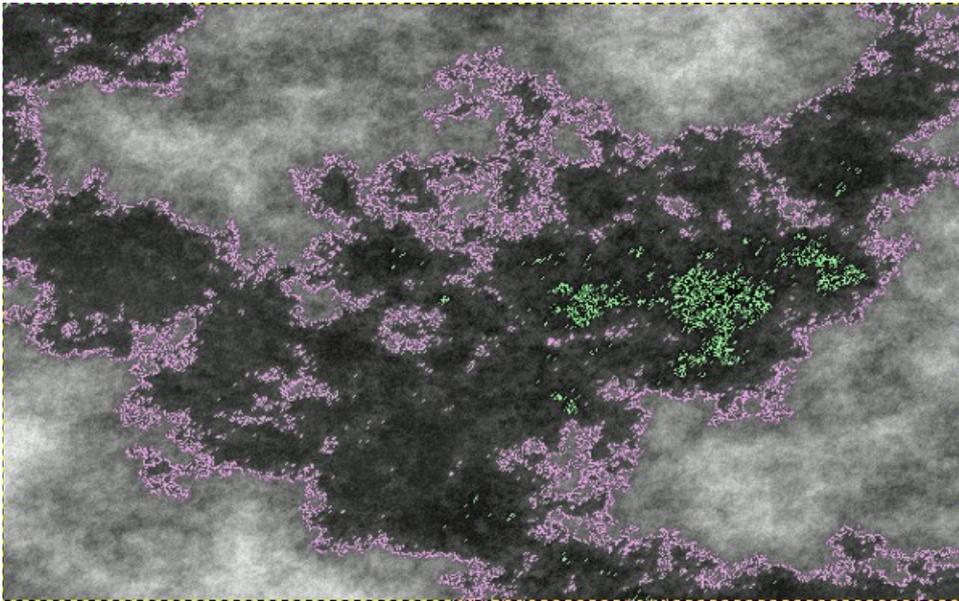


5. Try to keep both darker and lighter areas separate when choosing between three options that Desaturate menu offers. Darker areas are going to be land, lighter water.

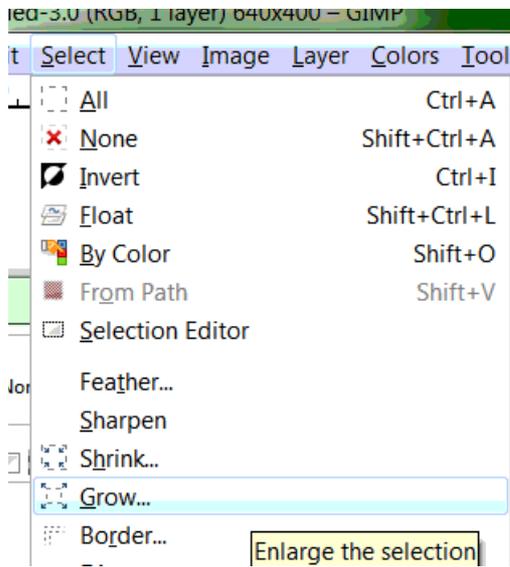


6. Next select “Magic Wand” tool (shortcut - “u” button on keyboard). Then click and hold on darker area of the plasma/image. Then move your mouse until most of the darker area is selected. On large images this can take quite a while (depending on your computer speed). Do not move your mouse too fast.

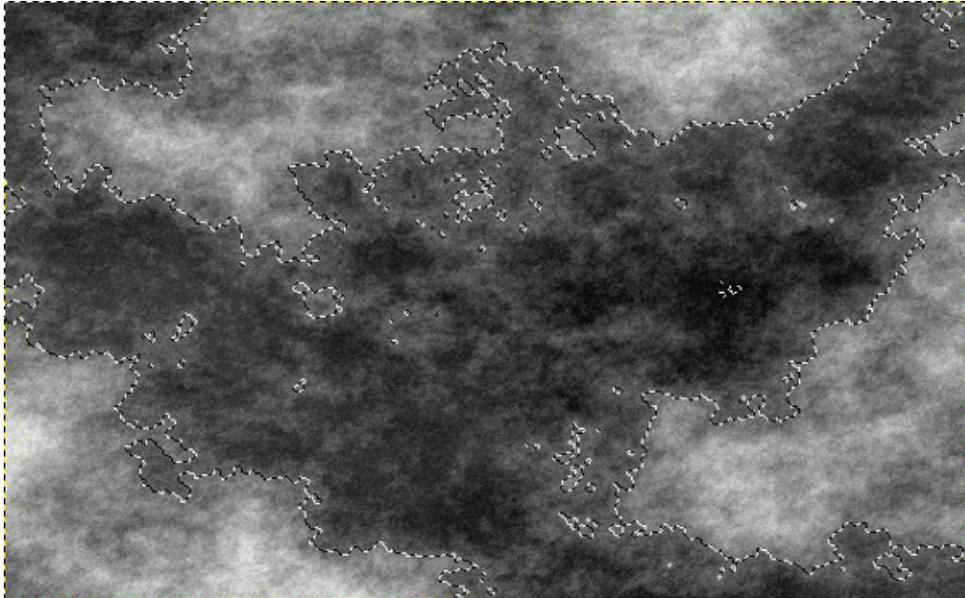
Here's a screenie of how much I selected. It is okay to have lighter areas and few pixel wide areas in selection when using this method.



7. Next we're going to grow (Select → Grow) until our selection does not look as fractured as before.

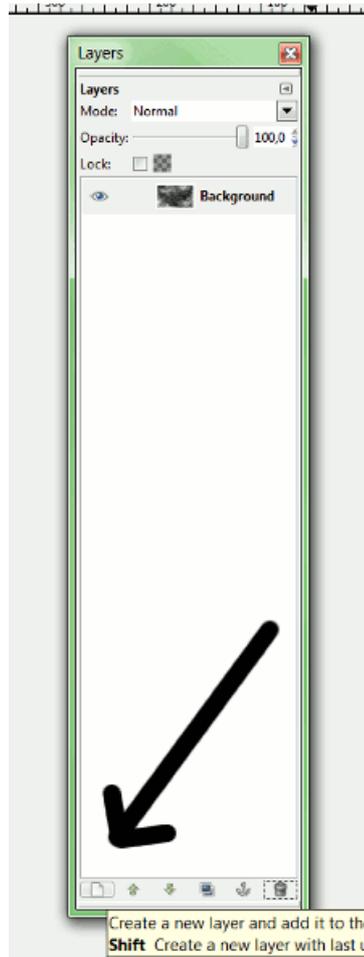


8. This looks better than our previous selection, does it not? Do not worry about little unselected areas inside of our selection, those are going to be lakes. When Creating real map, I would have used lasso tool and magic wand tools to select more or less areas inside the selection, so I'd get better lakes, rivers and landmass, but this is just a tutorial



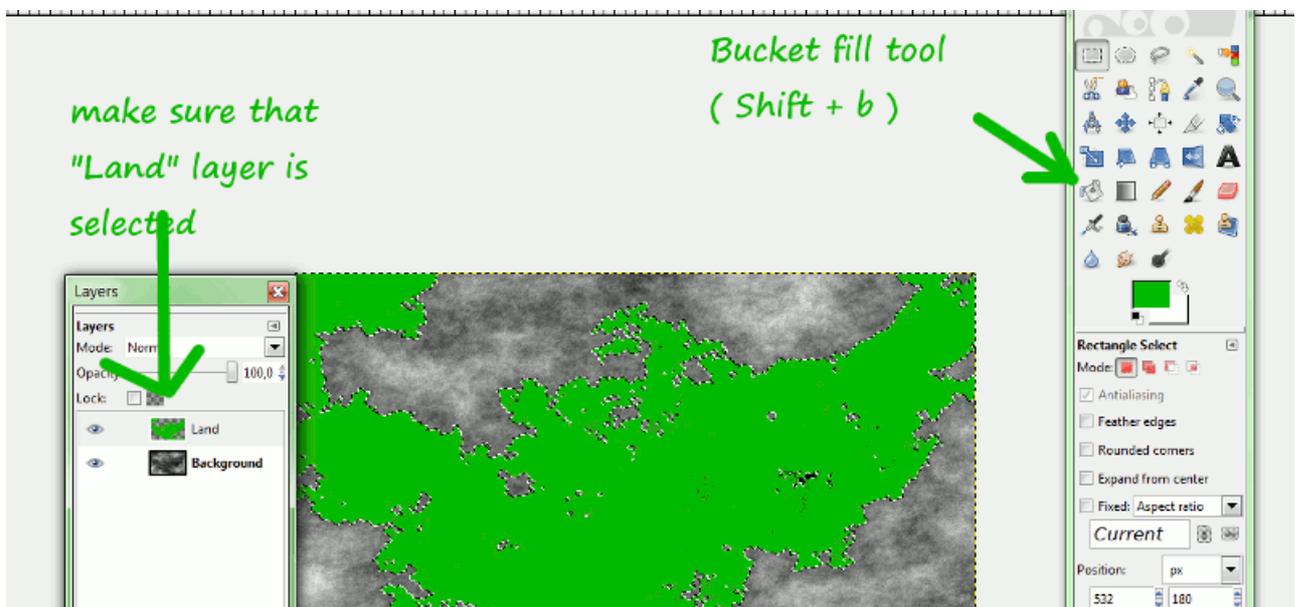
9. Next lets create a new layer. Just click on the button on the „layers“ dock. If that dock is not present, it may be attached to „Toolbox“ or you can open it by pressing „CTRL + L“ (or windows → docks → layers).

Anyways, click on the “New Layer” button and name that layer “Land”.



10. If, by some odd reason, your selected „land“ area got de-selected, then repeat step 6.

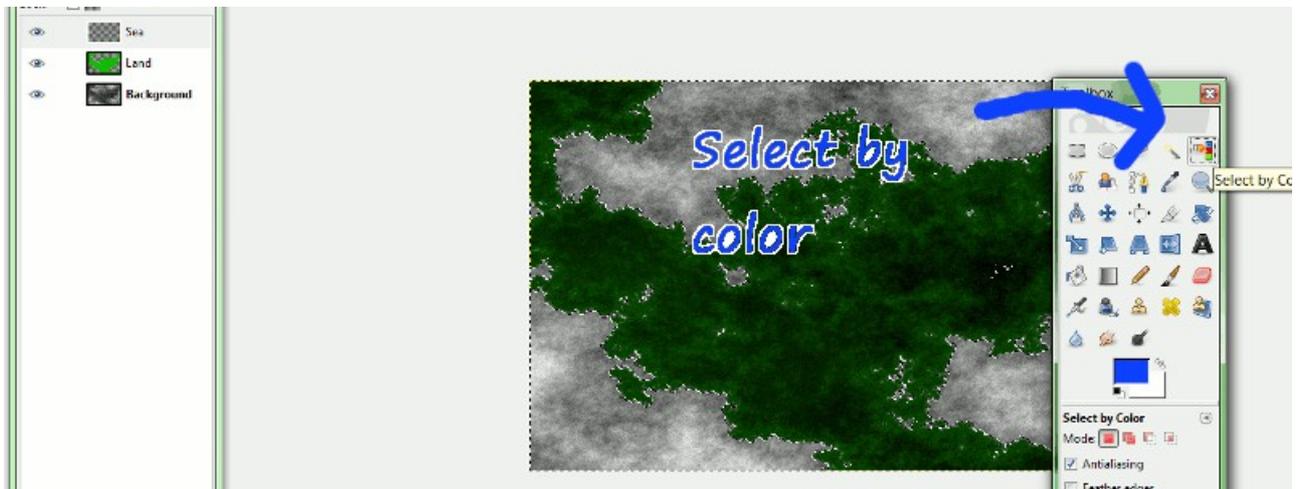
Next click on the newly created layer and then fill the selection with „bucket tool“ (Shortcut Shift + b). Let it be green. Don't worry about it all being one single ugly color.



11. Next set „Land“ layer mode on „multiply“. (there's a dropdown menu in „Layers“ menu (ctrl + L) with several options to choose from (dodge, burn, divide, multiply and other options)

12. Once that is done, Click on „Select by color tool“ then click on the Green area which we bucketfilled. As it is all one color, entire „land“ area will be selected.

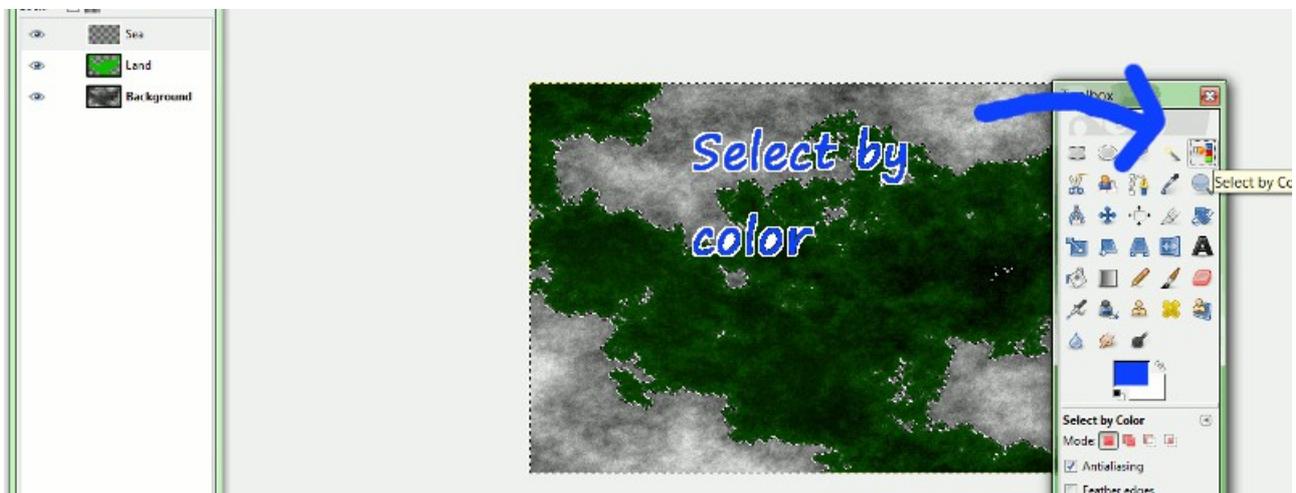
*If you get white area selected aswell, or your selection does not surround only land, then you're on wrong layer, click on Land layer and try again.



13. Next, press „Ctrl + I“ or Select → Invert

That inverted the selection, meaning that instead of having green area selected, we now have all of the non-green area selected.

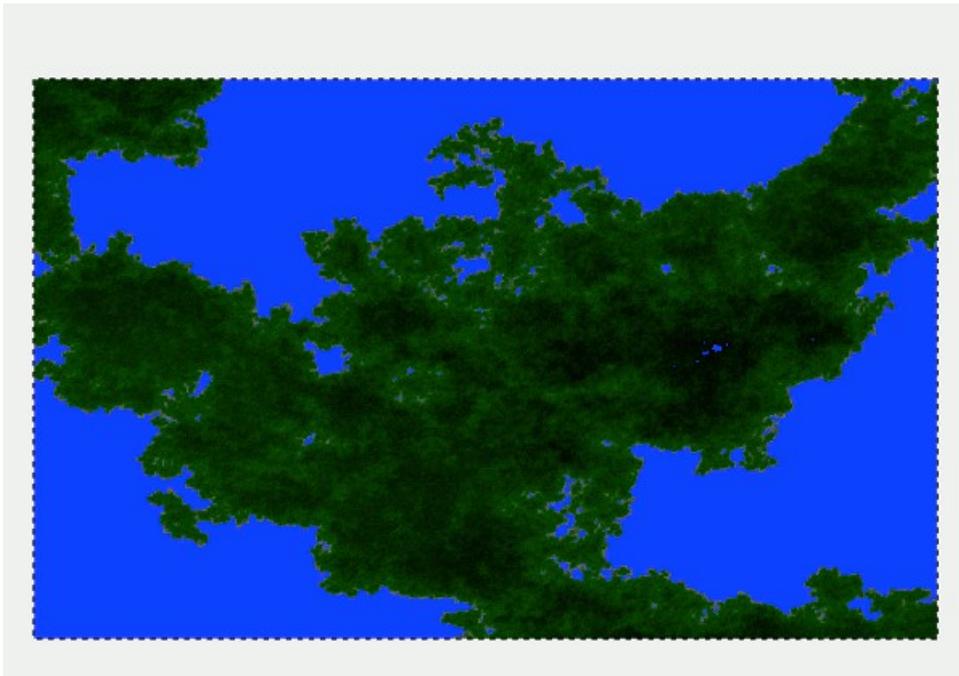
14. create a new layer, Name it „Sea“ or „Water“



15. Click on „Sea“ layer.

Next Use the bucketfill tool (Shift + b) and click on the non-green area.

Your map should now look like this.



*If you filled your land area (green area) with blue, then simply undo (ctrl + z or edit → undo), and invert selection.

*It is also important to keep land and sea layers separate (you can click on small eye icon next to layer name to make sure that layers are separate, clicking on sea layer eye would remove the blue area and clicking on and would remove the green area.)

- Also make sure that there is no „blue“ undreaneath land layer, if there is then return to step 10 and redo.

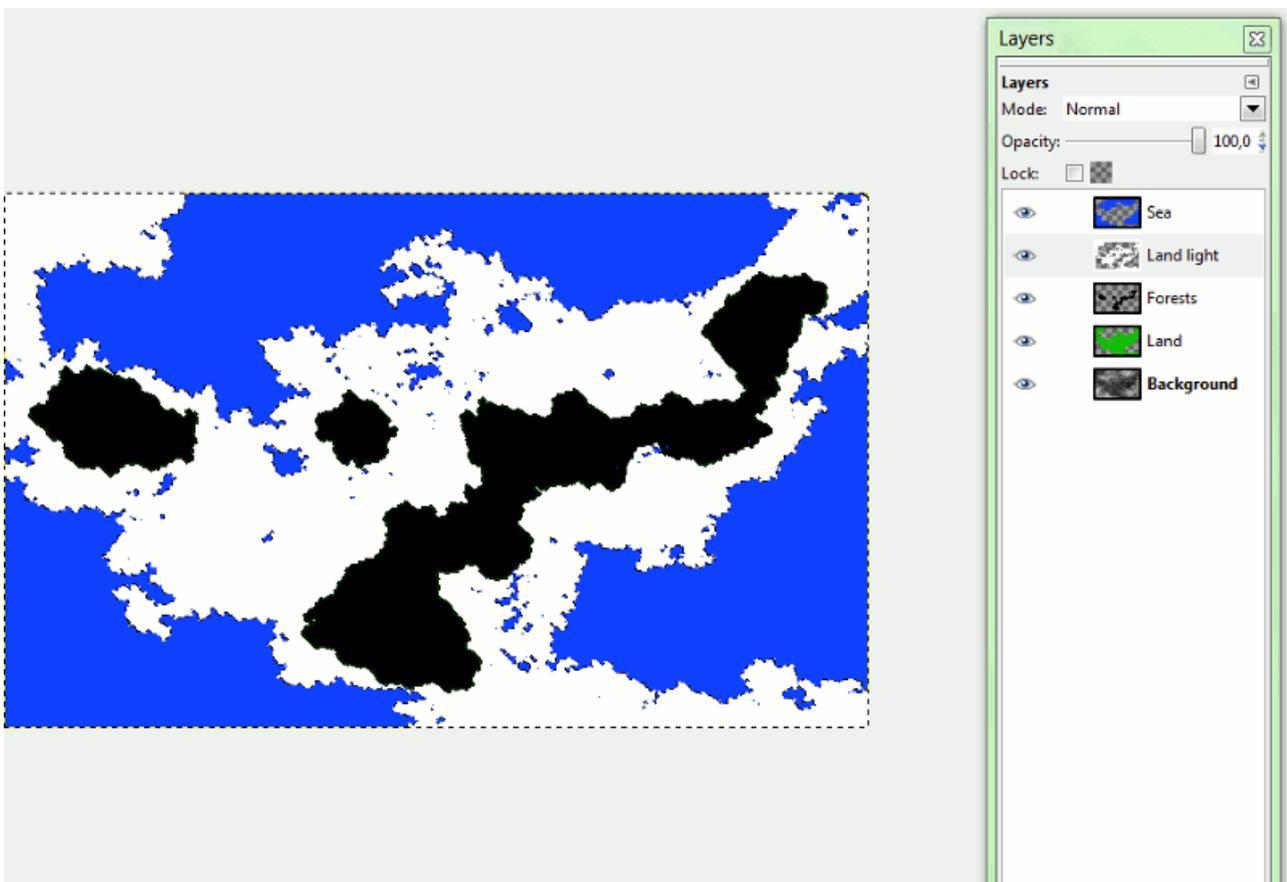
16. Create a new layer and call it „Land light“. If you do not remember how, then check step 9.

Click on „land layer“, use color selection tool (step 12) to select green areas again.

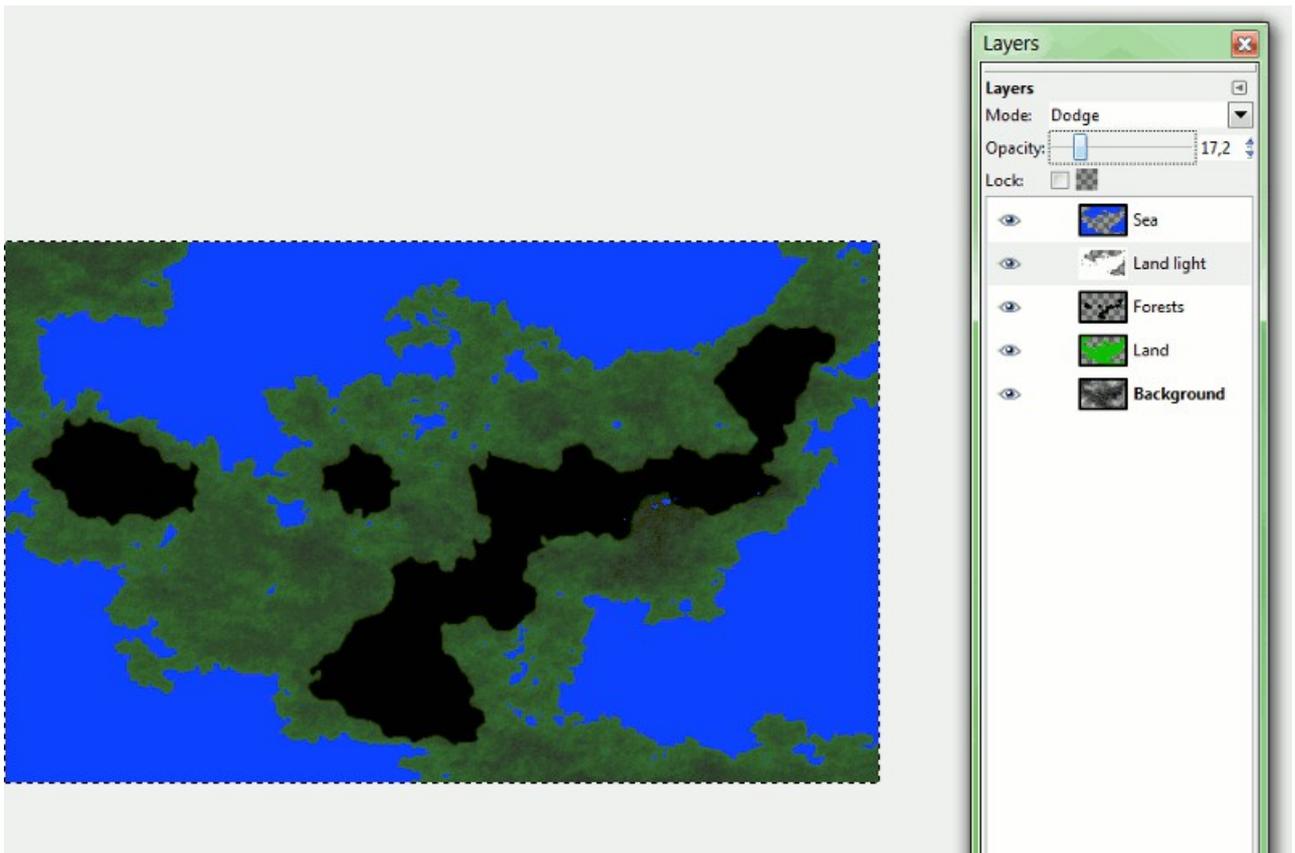
Then click on „Land light“ layer.

Then bucketfill selected areas.

Ignore „forest“ layer and black areas on this picture, I decided not to create forests or hills in this example. Your result, so far should look like this (without the black areas):

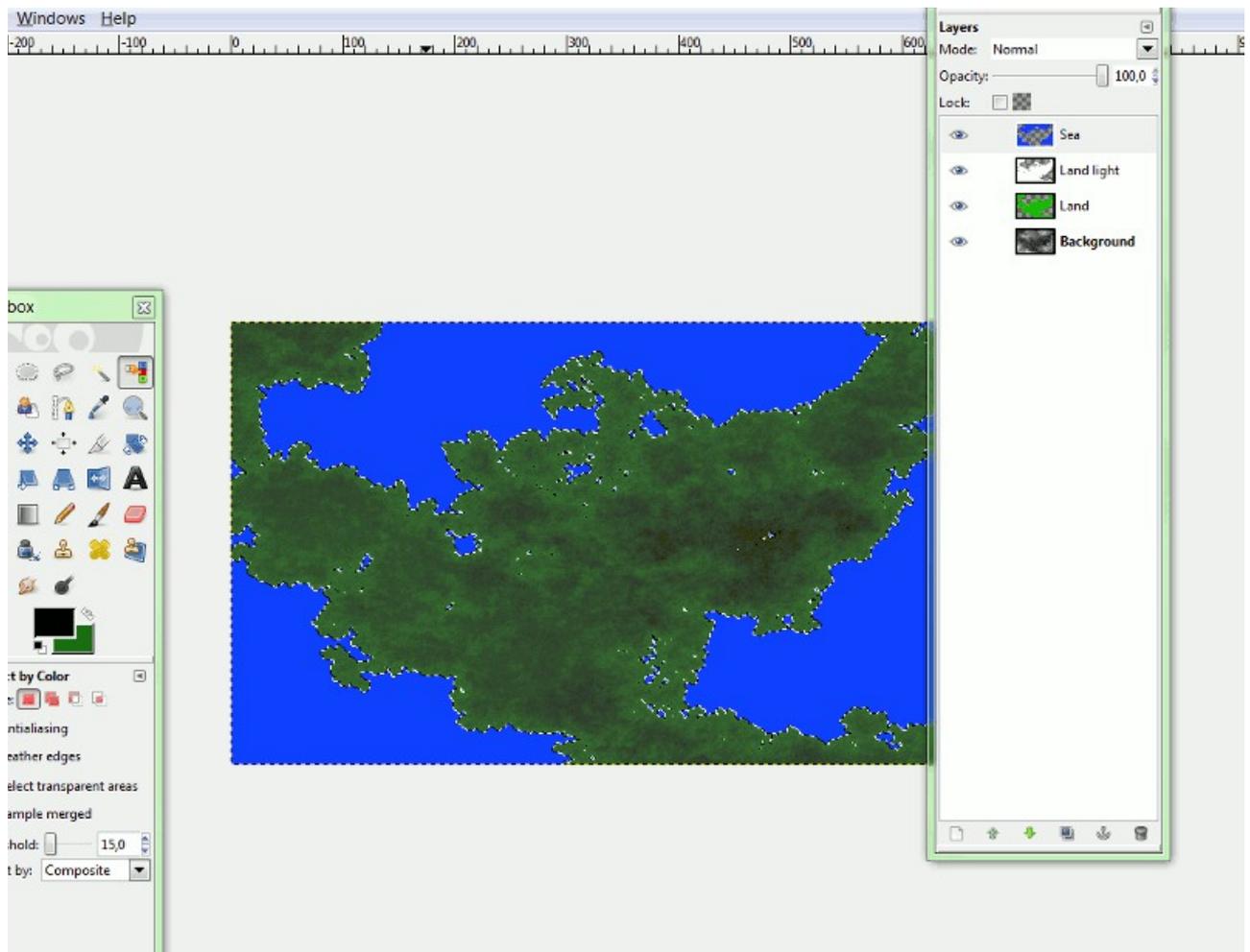


17. Next set „Land Light“ layer on dodge, and move the Opacity to somewhere around 15. Depending on your color. This is to make the green color less vibrant/sharp.

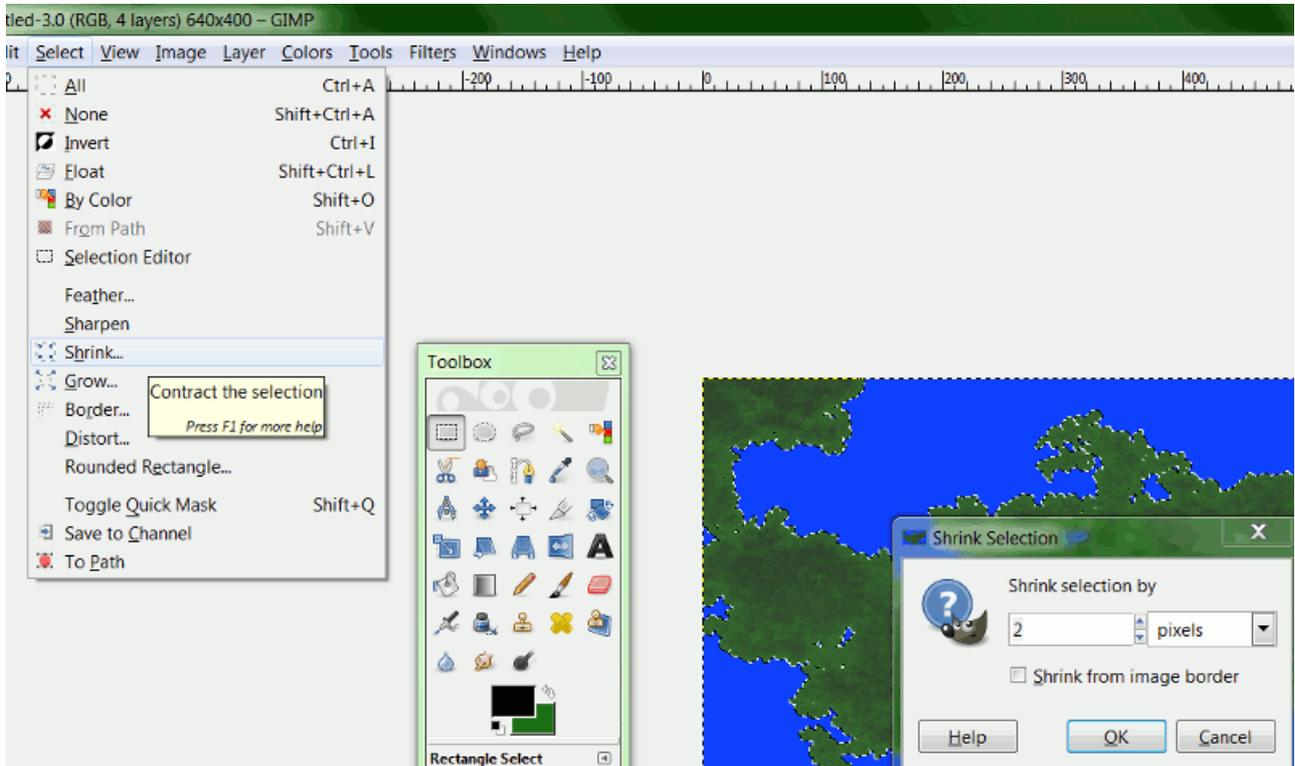


18. Our sea looks ugly, with no coastline and one color only. Let's fix that.

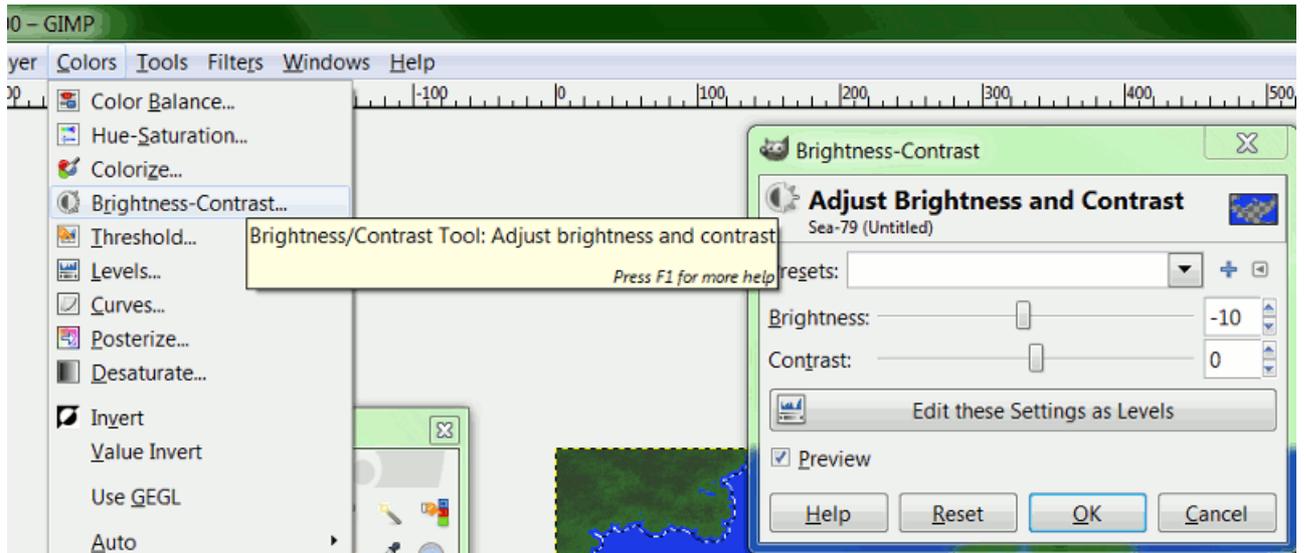
Click on „Sea layer“, then click on blue area (any area will do) with „color select“ tool. Your selection and progress so far should look similar to this:



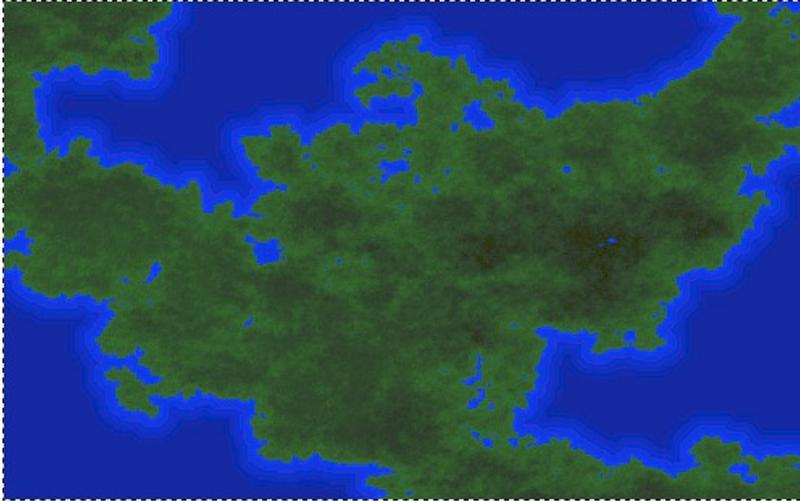
19. Select → Shrink and shrink the area I chose “2” (but I use more on larger maps)



20. Next, click on Colors → Brightness and Contrast.
Then reduce contrast by 10.



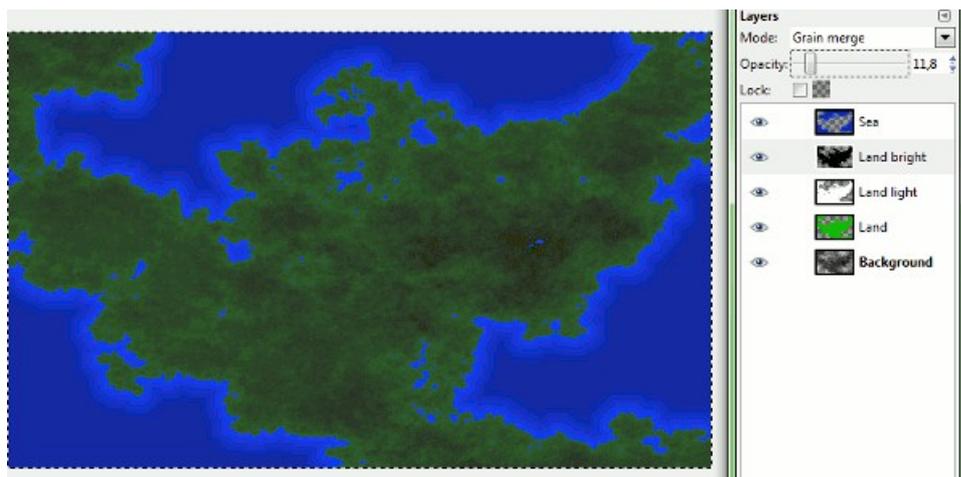
21. Repeat steps 19 and 20 a few times, I think I did the cycle like 8 times. End result looks like this:



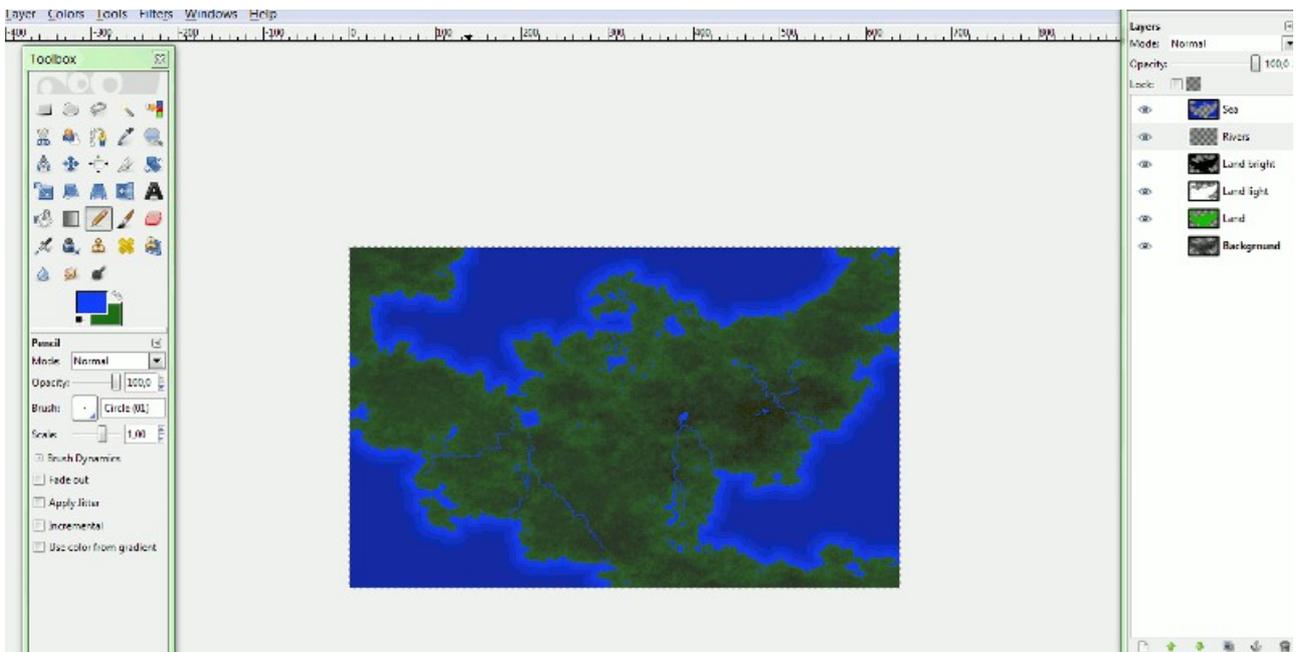
When creating my maps, I'd vary the „shrunk“ size in steps 19 and 20, as well as contrast reduction size, but this'll do for now.

22. You do not have to do it, but I created an extra layer called „Land Bright“, by selecting „Land layer“, Click on it with „Select by Color“ tool, creating a new layer, then filling selected area with black color and setting that layer on „Grain merge“ mode.

When creating real map, I have quite a bit more layers, on different modes and then end result will look a bit better and less „plasma“ will shiny through the background. I love using layers. But this will do for now:



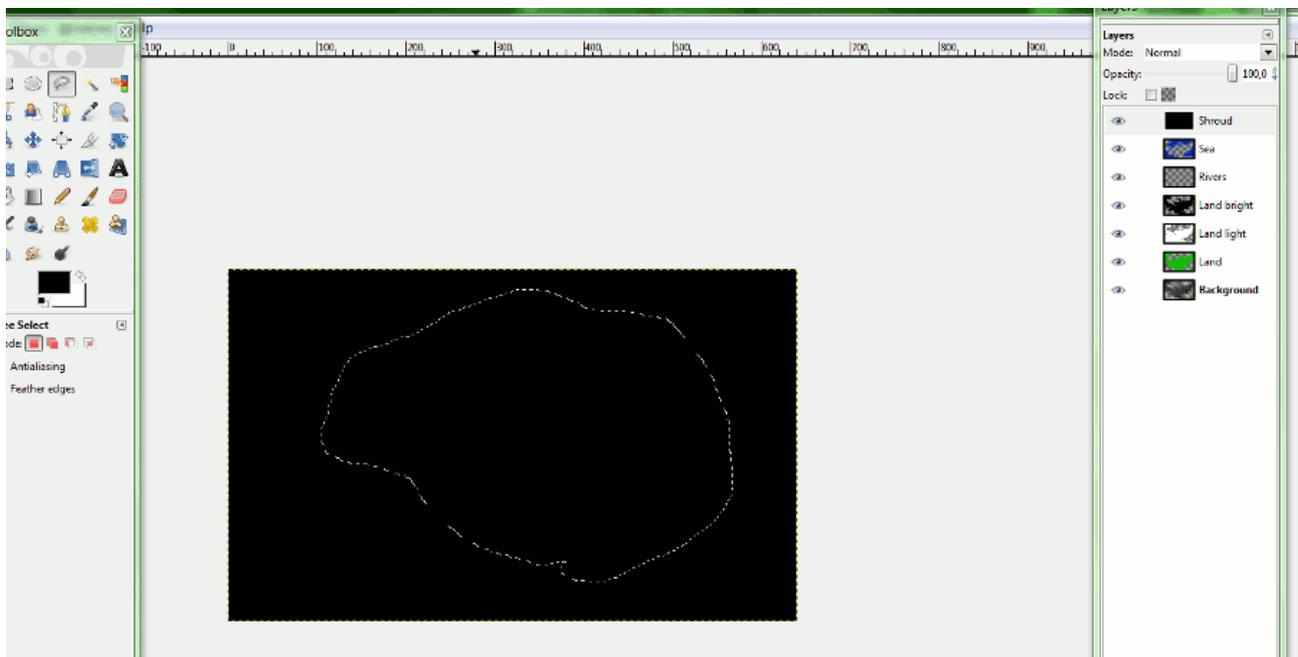
23. I also created a new layer called „Rivers“, then selected „pencil“ tool, set its size 1x1 pixel. Used the same color that we used originally when coloring sea and drew a few rivers and couple of extra lakes on the map.



24. Next create a new layer, let's name it „Shroud“. Move it to be the top-most layer and then bucketfill the layer with color „black“.

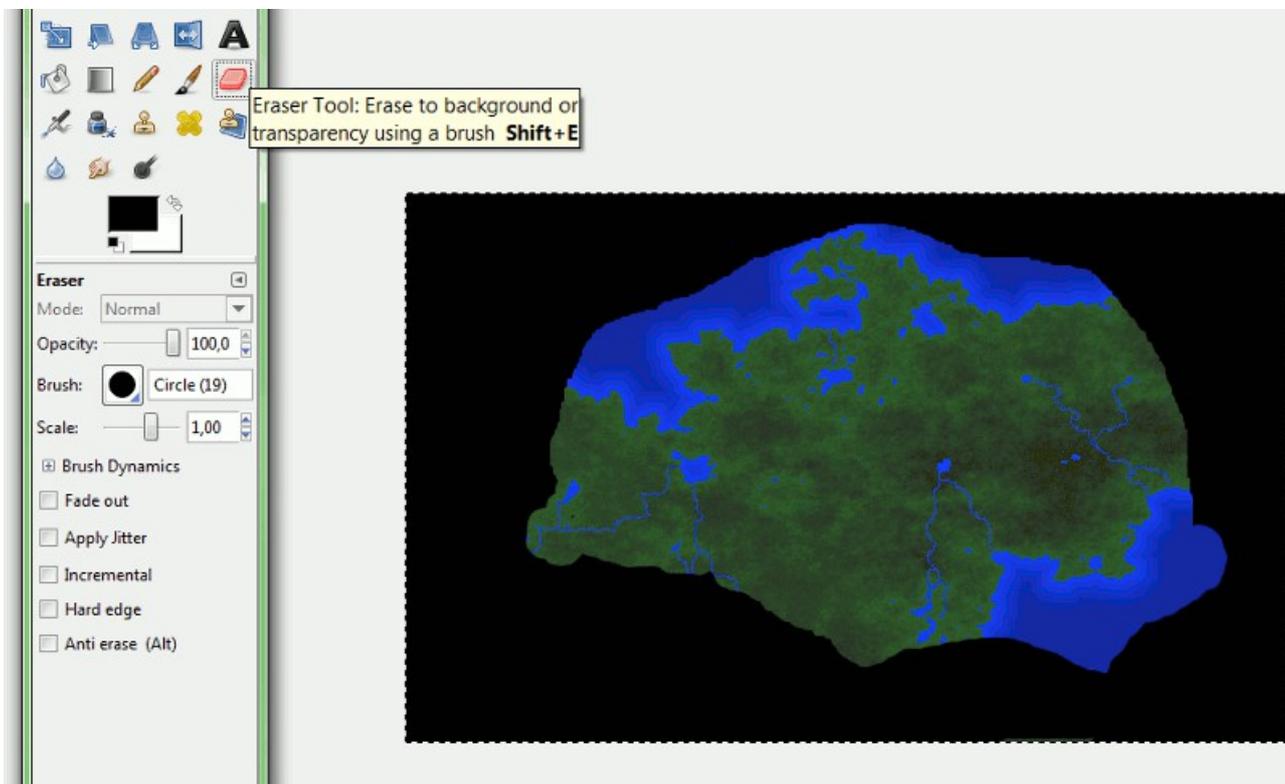


25. I then used lasso tool to select an area to be revealed:



26.

Finally, pressing delete and using eraser and paintbrush tool to make sure that everything looks good and all the areas that have to be visible are visible:



27. If you did not save your map originally, then first choose (File → Save As or Ctrl + Shift + S). Then name the file – My first Map.xcf

XCF is gimp default save file, it's large file, but it'll keep all the layers, if you do want to use this map later/alter/edit it, you'll need the original xcf file. I use two copies, usually called
NESNAME_Worldmap.xcf
and
NESNAME_Worldmap_BACKUP.xcf

When I start work, then I save two copies of work and then regularly save NESNAME_Worldmap (ctrl+s).

In rare case that I mess up, I can always revert to BACKUP (without changes) map. Once I'm 100% sure that I'm finished with editing, then i oversave the original as well as the Backup versions of the map.

There's nothing worse than losing ALL of your work by accidentally, say, merging all layers and then closing gimp. - If you don't have a backup file, then you could be in a big trouble.

28. Finally, choose Save As (File → Save As or Ctrl + Shift + S). Then Save your image as, for an example, MyFirstMap.gif

You can try different image extensions - .JPG, .GIF and .PNG are the most common picture formats.

.jpg leaves ugliest pictures but best filesize,
.png leaves best picture but worst filesize (bmp is even worse than that)

.gif leaves good quality picture and good filesize, that is the extension that I use. You can also reduce filesize and improve image quality with variety of methods, including reducing colors (posterizing) or indexing colors, but I won't go into that topic.

I added example pictures and two .XCF files (this and one other map – in – progress) into the .zip file.

Northen Wolf

@Civfanatics → Never Ending Stories

I hope this guide was useful to someone. Yes, this method does not create maps that many will like, but I like this style.

Northen Wolf

@Civfanatics

Never Ending Stories

My method of creating maps