

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 03 Issue 24 Wednesday, February 3, 2010

The Kitchen is Where it Happens

Orinda Heart of the Home Kitchen Tour—February 10th

By Andrea A. Firth



Digging Deep on page 8



Kitchen tour co-chairs Jill Wharton and Gayle Lintner.

Photo Andy Scheck

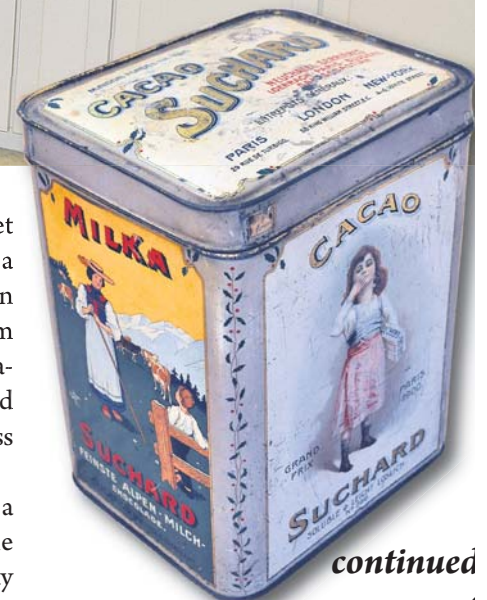
“The kitchen is where family happens,” says Gayle Lintner as she and Jill Wharton, co-chairs of the Orinda Heart of the Home Kitchen Tour, finalize details for the February 10th event that will showcase six newly remodeled kitchens in Orinda homes. Seated around the large six by seven foot granite topped island in the center of Linter’s open and inviting kitchen, the women are hoping for a good turnout for the second annual kitchen tour,

which attracted about 200 attendees in the first year. “We have a variety of really great kitchens for people to see,” says Wharton.

With homes located in several different Orinda neighborhoods on both sides of Highway 24, tour goers can start north of the freeway and work their way south or the vice versa. After a morning pleasantly spent ogling the beautiful kitchens on display, attendees are encouraged to stop in at Shelby’s for lunch

or the Republic of Cake for a sweet treat—both businesses will donate a percentage of their sales to the kitchen tour fundraising effort. Proceeds from the kitchen tour will support the Miramonte High School Class of 2010 grad night—a celebration for the senior class in a fun and safe environment.

Lintner’s own kitchen will be a focal spot on the tour. “This is the fourth kitchen that I’ve had my way with,” says Linter with a laugh.



*continued
on page 4*

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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

LAFAYETTE	Last reported: 5
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$1,100,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$2,225,000
MORAGA	Last reported: 6
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$220,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$880,000
ORINDA	Last reported: 9
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$796,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,290,000

Home sales are compiled by Cal REsource, an Oakland real estate information company. Sale prices are computed from the county transfer tax information shown on the deeds that record at close of escrow and are published five to eight weeks after such recording. This information is obtained from public county records and is provided to us by California REsource. Neither Cal REsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

LAFAYETTE

3117 Indian Way, \$1,250,000, 4 Bdrms, 4112 SqFt, 1992 YrBlt, 1-13-10
100 Iverson Drive, \$1,100,000, 4 Bdrms, 2862 SqFt, 1999 YrBlt, 12-30-09
691 Old Jonas Hill Road, \$2,225,000, 6 Bdrms, 3401 SqFt, 1972 YrBlt, 1-5-10
1336 Reliez Valley Road, \$1,547,500, 4 Bdrms, 3676 SqFt, 1945 YrBlt, 12-30-09
12 Warwick Court, \$1,100,000, 3 Bdrms, 1872 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 1-7-10

MORAGA

1033 Alta Mesa Drive, \$475,000, 2 Bdrms, 925 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 1-12-10
781 Augusta Drive, \$220,000, 3 Bdrms, 2430 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 1-4-10
843 Augusta Drive, \$660,000, 3 Bdrms, 2148 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 12-31-09
695 Carroll Drive, \$685,000, 3 Bdrms, 1646 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 12-30-09
11 Lynwood Place, \$880,000, 4 Bdrms, 2318 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 1-5-10
227 Paseo Bernal, \$554,000, 2 Bdrms, 1802 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 1-6-10

ORINDA

75 Bates Boulevard, \$865,000, 4 Bdrms, 2588 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 1-6-10
64 Brookside Road, \$758,000, 3 Bdrms, 1933 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 12-30-09
8 Crestview Court, \$796,000, 4 Bdrms, 1590 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 1-6-10
48 Dolores Way, \$849,000, 4 Bdrms, 2073 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 12-31-09
35 Honey Hill Road, \$1,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 2338 SqFt, 1938 YrBlt, 1-11-10
73 Orchard Road, \$1,188,000, 3 Bdrms, 2629 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 1-8-10
207 Rheem Boulevard, \$1,290,000, 5 Bdrms, 3046 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 1-5-10
24 Rheem Boulevard, \$960,000, 3 Bdrms, 2171 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 1-7-10
125 Sleepy Hollow Lane, \$1,160,000, 5 Bdrms, 3492 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 1-11-10

Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

LAFAYETTE

3237 La Canada, 94549, Washington Mutual Bank, 01-07-10, \$1,147,500, 3223 sf, 3 bd
3246 Park Lane, 94549, First Republic Bank, 01-07-10, \$1,866,000, 4422 sf, 4 bd
109 Villa Court, 94549, Green Leaf Properties, 01-05-10, \$525,500, 2121 sf, 4 bd

Increased Demand, Tighter Inventory at Entry Level

Nudge Home Prices Higher in Fourth Quarter

Submitted by Cathy Harrington, Prudential Realty

Increased demand from first-time homebuyers motivated to purchase a home before December 1 to qualify for an \$8,000 federal income tax credit and fewer bargain-priced bank-owned properties on the market in Contra Costa County pushed home prices slightly higher in 21 of 27 communities during the fourth quarter of 2009, according to a report by the research division of Prudential California Realty based on an analysis of MLS data.

Countywide, the median price of a home sold in the fourth quarter increased by 5 percent from \$344,434 in the third quarter to \$362,467 – 11 percent higher than the fourth quarter 2008 median price of \$325,761. This higher median price and a continued decline in the average number of days a

home was on the market before sale provided further evidence that the Contra Costa County existing home market is stabilizing, and that the supply of bargain-basement REOs has largely been depleted.

Locally, Antioch, Bay Point, Clayton, El Sobrante, Hercules, Oakley, Pinole, Pleasant Hill, Richmond, San Pablo and San Ramon reported increases in the median sales price for the third consecutive quarter. Quarter-over-quarter median price declines were confined to higher-priced Alamo, Danville, Kensington, Orinda and Walnut Creek. On an annualized basis, only five local markets (Bay Point, El Sobrante, Moraga, Oakley and Richmond) experienced flat or increased prices, with the remainder reporting annual declines in the single or low double-digits. ... continued on page 5



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Lafayette Woodlands, Lafayette



Built in 2003, this 5BD/4BA, 4258 sq. ft. traditional has country flair, quality construction, high-end finishes and charm. The corner .59 acre level lot includes outdoor fireplace, in-ground spa, level lawn and vegetable garden.

Call for Price

Beautiful Burton Valley Remodel!

Burton Valley, Lafayette



This turn-key 4BD/2.5BA, 1959 sq. ft. home has been beautifully remodeled from head to toe! The pristine .24 acre setting offers multiple landscape venues including spacious level lawn & raised vegetable beds.

Call for Price

The Kitchen is Where it Happens

... continued from page 1

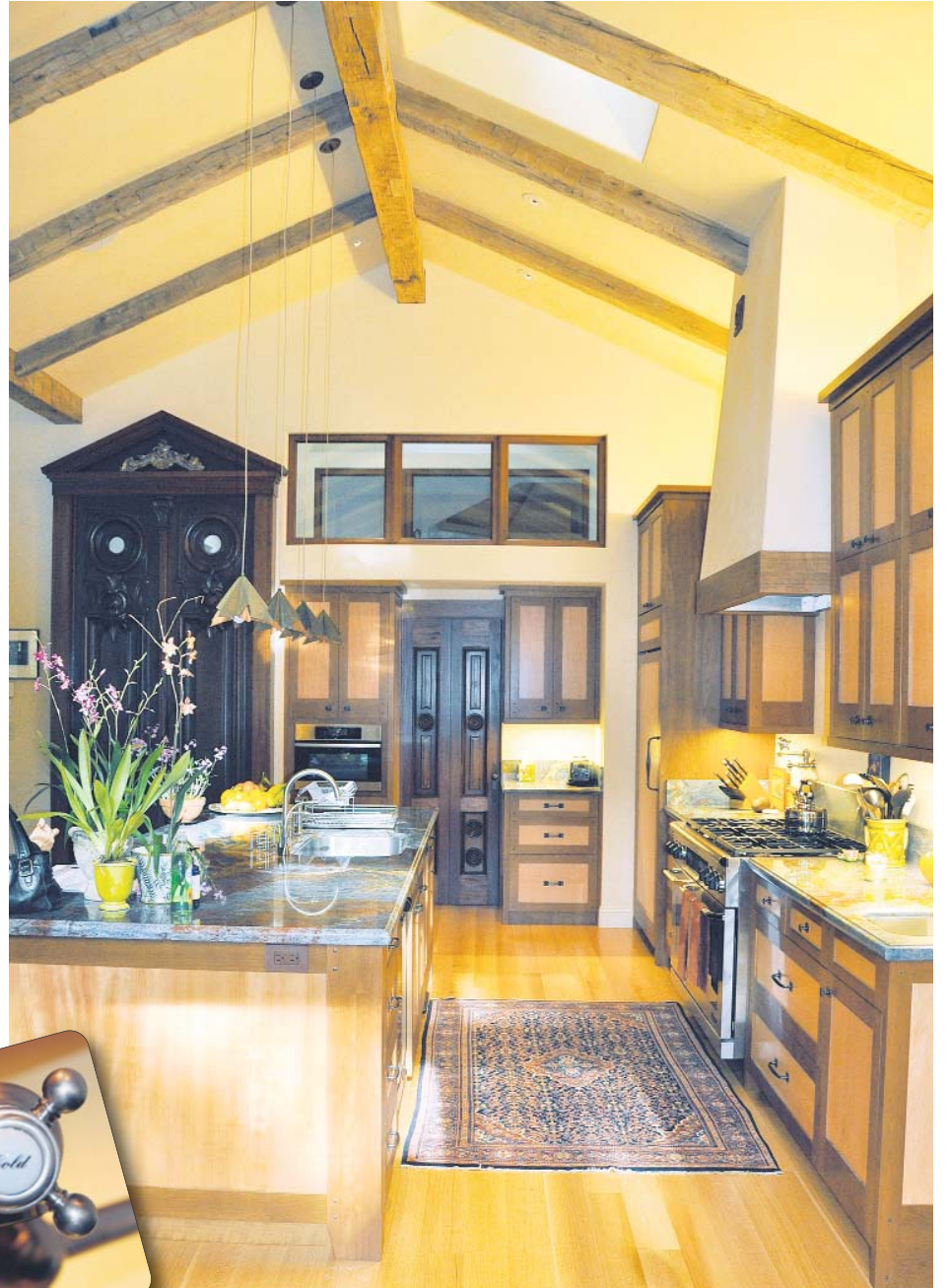


Pat Rudebusch

She recently refaced the island walls adding intricately carved maple corbels that are reminiscent of the legs on the antique kitchen dining table, a detail that is

repeated on the dramatic wood-covered cook top hood. As a twist on the ubiquitous large vase of flowers that often compliments a large island top, Linter found and restored a 200-year-old French meat scale that now serves as her island's centerpiece.

Pat Rudebusch, a longtime Orinda resident and tireless supporter of Orinda's schools, will serve as guest chef at Linter's home. Rudebusch will be making apple cinnamon crepes for tour goers to enjoy as they browse the many raffle items that will be on display. The City of Orinda has donated a special prize package that will entitle one lucky young resident to serve as the Grand Marshall Junior of the July 4th parade. The Grand Marshall Junior will also be treated to lunch with the Mayor, a tour of City Hall, and a pizza party with friends and family at Village Pizza. Several other great prize packages will be raffled off the day of the tour including a one-week stay in a luxu-



Laura Sawczuk's new kitchen

Photos Andy Scheck



Antique dining table and chandelier from Munich in the foreground of Lintner's kitchen

rious two-bedroom, ocean-view condominium in Mexico. Raffle tickets (\$5 each) will be available for purchase at Linter's home.

"We are trying to involve the whole Orinda community in this event," states Wharton. "It is really heart warming to see the many business owners who donate to our kids," adds Lintner.

While each kitchen on the tour offers a number of unique and interesting

elements, both Lintner and Wharton agree that Laura Sawczuk's newly remodeled kitchen and family

room gives her spectacular home an added wow factor.

Sawczuk waited 23 years to redo her kitchen, a project driven in large part by an aging roof with several leaks that needed to be replaced.

continued on page 6

The Orinda Heart of the Home Kitchen Tour will be held on **February 10th, 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.**

Increased Demand, Tighter Inventory at Entry Level

... continued from page 2

Countywide, 2,980 homes changed hands, a 10 percent drop from the third quarter and 15 percent below the fourth quarter 2008 total, when 3,524 homes were sold. Top-selling markets in the third quarter included Antioch (428 sold), Brentwood (308 sold), Richmond (304 sold), Concord (283 sold) and Pittsburg (234 sold). Sales were up year over year in 15 markets, with the largest percentage increases in higher-priced communities where foreclosures are beginning to play a role.

"Looking ahead, homebuyers can expect continued competition in most communities as low interest rates, the extension through April 30, 2010, of the \$8,000 federal tax credit for first-time homebuyers, and a new \$6,500 tax credit for current homeowners who trade up before April 30 provide motivation to buy now," says David Gardner, managing director of Prudential California Realty. "Expect short sale offers to be accepted in greater numbers as banks seek to avoid the cost of holding REO properties."

City	Homes Sold Q4/09	Homes Sold Q4/08	% Change	Avg. DOM Q4/09	Avg. DOM Q4/08	Change 09/08 (Days)	Median Price ** Q4/09	Median Price Q4/08	% Change
Concord	283	292	-3	44	46	-2	\$311,000	\$319,500	-3
Danville	112	67	67	63	62	1	\$845,000	\$935,000	-10
Lafayette	61	45	36	65	54	11	\$930,000	\$1,250,000	-26
Moraga	23	14	64	92	55	37	\$890,000	\$890,000	0
Orinda	47	36	31	82	61	21	\$868,200	\$972,500	-11
Pleasant Hill	68	57	19	50	62	-12	\$500,000	\$518,000	-3

Fourth Quarter 2009 Housing Market Survey – Cities in Contra Costa County. Single-Family Detached Homes

* Days on market is the number of days a property was listed on the market until it went under contract at its final listing price. This may not reflect previous listings.

**The median home price for the entire county is the weighted mean of median home prices of cities within Contra Costa County. Data are sourced from multiple listing services and are deemed reliable but not guaranteed. All percentages rounded to nearest whole number.

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—Nancy N., Lafayette seller



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The Kitchen is Where it Happens

... continued from page 4



Sawczuk's kitchen island and family room

With 2/3 of the roof gone, Sawczuk had the opportunity to play with the room's design. "I tried hard to turn the layout of the kitchen and family room upside down, but remarkably the floor plan stayed pretty much intact," she says.

Throughout the one and half year

building project, Sawczuk focused her attention toward incorporating a variety of wood and stone materials in the kitchen.

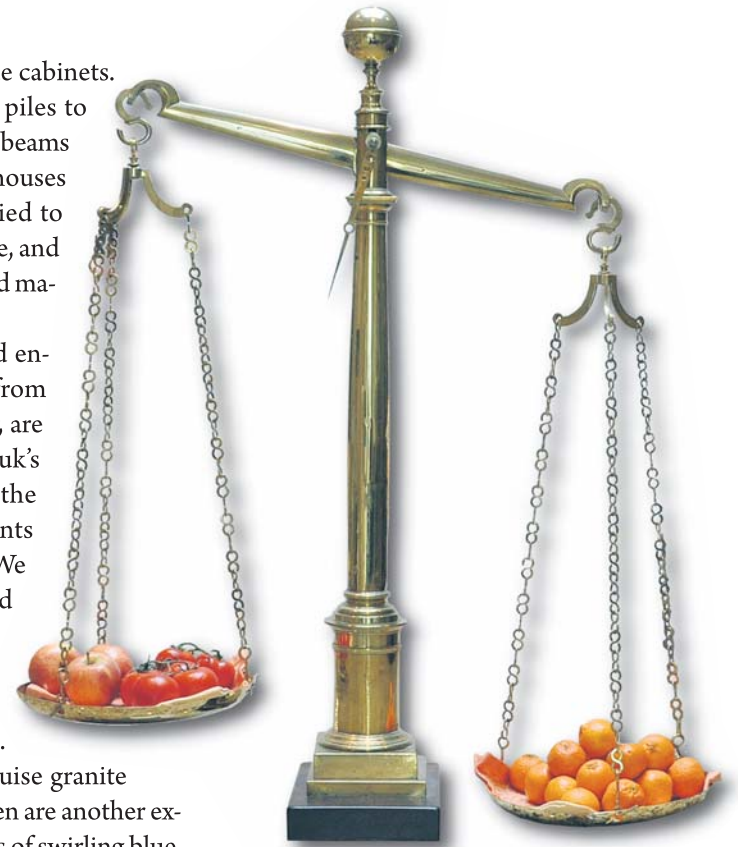
"I love really unique grains—the way they show their imperfections and differences," she explains. Sawczuk handpicked each piece of the cherry and wide-grained fir

Photos Andy Scheck

used in the custom-made cabinets. She also sifted through piles to choose the wood ceiling beams salvaged from old farmhouses in the Midwest. "We tried to build as green as possible, and we used a lot of reclaimed materials," notes Sawczuk.

The 13-foot arched entryway doors, sourced from a restaurant in Paraguay, are a key example of Sawczuk's artistic penchant for the unique, eclectic accents throughout her home. "We have traveled around quite a bit. I find something magical about having different, unique things," she says.

The distinctive Blue Louise granite countertops in the kitchen are another example. The stone's bursts of swirling blue, white, rust, and gold remind Sawczuk and her husband of the color and movement in Van Gogh's *Starry Night* painting.



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Having completed the kitchen remodel in early December, Sawczuk says the new room provided a wonderful setting to enjoy the holidays with friends and family. As she sits at the kitchen farm table and looks out the adjacent large windows that provide a new view of her park-like backyard and several mature redwood trees, Sawczuk comments, "Oh yes, we have already had some great times here." As they say, the kitchen is where it happens.

Andrea A. Firth can be reached by email: andrea@lamorindaweekly.com



100-year old reclaimed wood ceiling beams in Sawczuk's kitchen

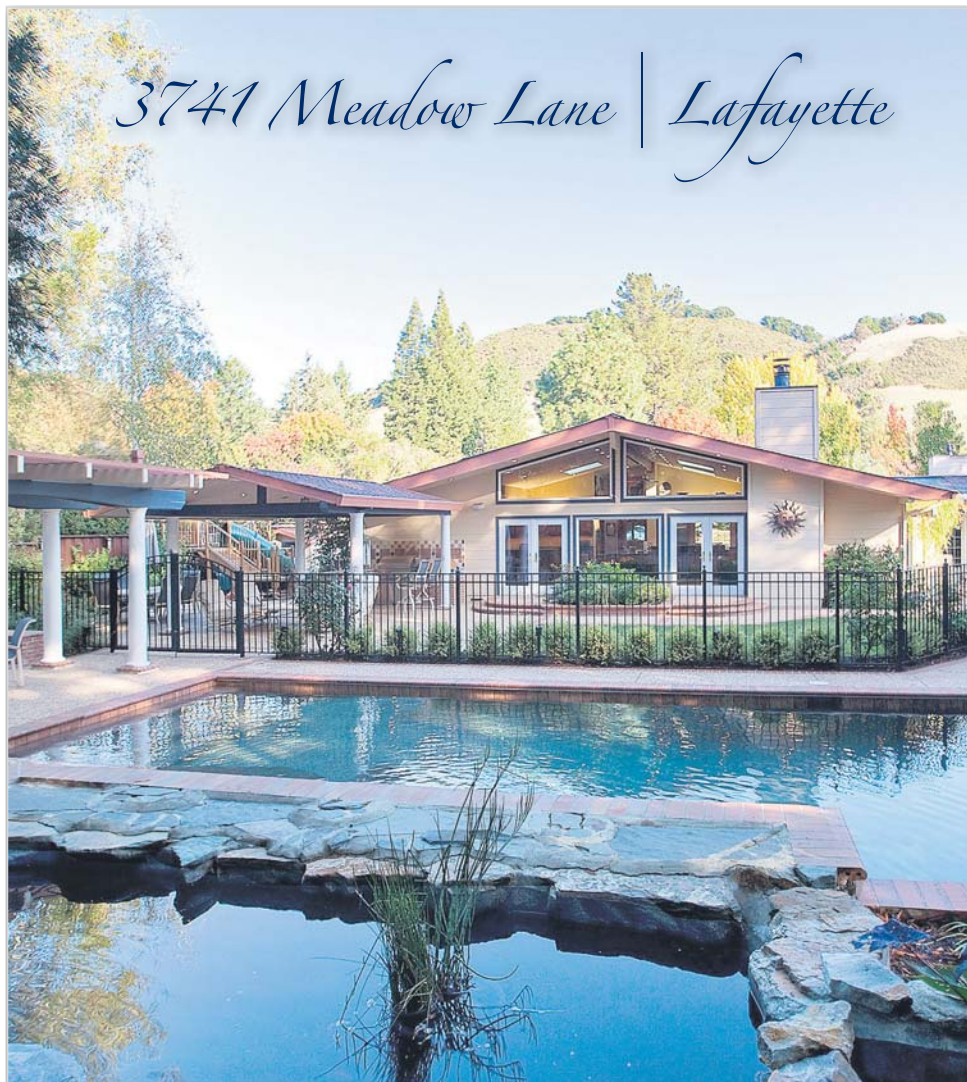


Lintner's custom-made hood and cook top

Tickets to the tour are \$25 and available at the following retail outlets:

- Across the Way (Moraga)
- Elaine's Nail
- J. Hettinger (Danville)
- Lazy K (Lafayette)
- Miramonte Webstore (for MHS parents)
- Orinda Books
- McDonnell Nursery

The Heart of the Home Kitchen Tour ticket will provide the home locations, descriptions, and a map.



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February 2010

Digging Deep: Scents, Senses, and Aphrodisiacs

By Cynthia Brian

“Love of gardening is a seed that once sown never dies, but always grows and grows to an enduring and ever-increasing source of happiness.” *Gertrude Jekyll*



A cavalcade of winter color with primroses

Photos Cynthia Brian

In the middle of every dark grey dreary winter, February, the month of love, lovers, and longing shyly signals the forthcoming rebirth of spring as sensuous jonquils stretch their stamens skyward. Amour is in the air and what better place to savor the sensuality than in the garden!

Our minds are the largest sex organs in our bodies. For an aphrodisiac to work, we have to allow positive, sensual thoughts to stimulate our senses. When we feast our eyes on beauty and inhale the luscious aroma of a familiar fragrance, we are transported to a time when romance reigned. Humans can distinguish approximately 4000 different odors. Ten thousand times more powerful than our sense of taste, our sense of smell releases a series of chemical reactions that arouse or sedate nerves, activate the immune system, or change the temperature of the body.

Want to bring more affection into your life? Take a walk in a garden where natural aromatherapy originated. If you are stressed at work, a short jaunt to visit the intensely fragrant flowers of jasmine will instantly settle your nerves. When you need a boost of confidence before an interview, presentation, or audition, inhale the peels from an orange, lemon, or other citrus. Do your children need to focus more on homework? Make a sachet of grapefruit peels, eucalyptus leaves, and rosemary

sprigs to promote concentration. Is indigestion bothering you after meals? Munch on peppermint leaves with your lunch. Are you having trouble sleeping at night? Pick a stem of fresh lavender, roll between your palms, and breathe in the vapors.

(A word of warning about lavender in the bedroom....lavender will help you sleep soundly but it also lowers the libido. Keep the flowers in the bathroom to sniff when insomnia hits or to toss in a warm bath to relax you.) Fill vases with aphrodisiac plants such as night blooming jasmine, rose, passionflower, citrus, or pink monkey flower to decorate the bedroom or place container plantings of these on the bedroom veranda.

Feed your sensual palate by planting fruits, vegetables, and herbs that offer a decadent dessert of sexuality. Effective aphrodisiacs include:

Asparagus	Grapes
Almonds	Pumpkins
Coriander	Cucumbers
Tangerines	Artichokes
Bananas	Fennel
Carrots	Raspberries
Basil	Salvia
Mustard greens	Arugula
Strawberries	Turnips
Broccoli	Pomegranate
Figs	

Coconut, pistachio nuts, ginger, and cacao are amorous fruits that you'll need to purchase at your local market. Numerous flowers are edible and contain a plethora of antioxidants to fight those free radicals and eliminate toxins in the body while giving you that loving feeling. Don't pick these from the sides of freeways, in someone else's yard, near a toxic dump, buy them from a florist or in a store. These truly need to be plucked straight from your garden. Before eating any plant that you are unfamiliar with, make sure to consult a professional who knows what is edible and what is poisonous. Sometimes only a part of the plant is edible and the rest is deadly. Be safe. A sample list of feel-good flowers are:

Alliums	Lilac
Apricot petals	Marigolds
Apple blossoms	Milkweed flowers
Bean blossoms	Monarda
Begonia	Nasturtiums
Calendula	Pansies
Cattail	Passion Flower
Carnations	Peach Blossoms
Cherry blossoms	Pear Blossoms
Chrysanthemums	Peonies
Citrus blossoms	Plum Blossoms
Clover	Prickly Pear Flower
Columbine	Primrose
Crabapple	Redbud
Dandelions	Roses
Daylilies	Squash Blossoms
Dianthus	Strawberry Flowers
Grape hyacinth	Sunflower
Geraniums	Thistles
Gladiolus	Violas
Hibiscus	Violets
Honeysuckles	Yarrow
Jasmine	

One of the season's wondrous ripe gifts is the orange. Its folk name is "love fruit" because the orange is sweet and sensuous. The orange warms your heart, restores your sense of humor, and brings out your bright side. If you are feeling depressed or sad, inhaling the peels works as a mood-elevator to restore a sunny disposition. I can attest to these statements.



Cynthia's by Japanese Maples in winter

Happy Gardening to You!

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In the past few weeks when rain has been our constant companion, my joy was renewed every time I walked up the hill to pick a radiant navel. The luscious juice dripped down my chin as I hungrily devoured the rind, pith, and flesh. An orange offers a concentrated Vitamin C shower that pollinates my dampened spirit. Oranges are my personal elixir. I cook with them, use the leaves in teas and the flowers in salads. I create love sachets and also throw the peels in my bath water when my muscles are aching. Besides a vacation to a warm beach, what more could I ask for in February?

When you start growing your own fresh healthy food, you'll be showing your heart some love while saving trips to the grocery store. February is Heart Health month, so why not enjoy increased vitamins, flavor, and color while munching from your personal Garden of Eden.

Love is not in the air. It's growing in your backyard. Discover the joys of your organic Love Potion #9. And remember, gardening is a lot like sex. If you are having fun, you are doing it right!

"I went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in." John Muir



Lover's Arrangement of roses, tulips, and candle



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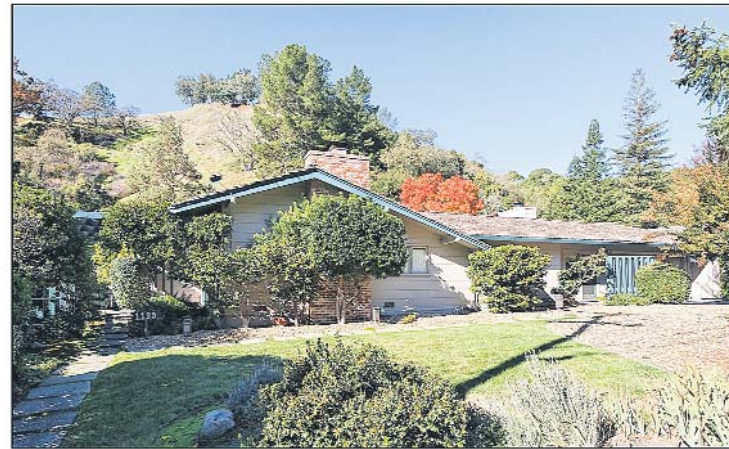
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Digging Deep: ...continued from page 8

Cynthia's Digging Deep Gardening Guide for February

It's not quite party time in our backyards. With the blitz of torrential rains, I've been reviewing architectural plans for building an ark. Better yet, I'll dig a damn.

With the soaked, soggy soil, refrain from tramping around on your lawn and groundcovers. If you haven't already pruned your roses, fruit trees, and vines, snap to it before it's too late. I pruned my specimens and gave them to garden club members who invited me to speak as well as to all my clients. It's fun to share the love.

- DREAM about spring by flipping through seed catalogues on those cold, dark days.
- CLEAN and sharpen tools to be ready for the March madness
- SPRAY your roses, fruit trees, and other deciduous trees with the final dormant spray to keep the bugs at bay.
- HOUSEPLANTS need a refresher this month. Repot with fresh potting soil, prune any dead leaves, and give a jolt of fertilizer.
- CLEAN house for the birds. Fill the feeders and provide fresh water. I found a nest when I pruned my crepe myrtle tree that was lined with Easter trimmings from last year!
- PLANT tender summer bulbs such as gladiolus, cannas, dahlia, and caladium towards the end of the month as the soil dries.
- PRUNE fuchsias and any still dormant shrubs or trees. Do not prune spring flowering specimens such as tulips, forsythia, lilac, or magnolia.
- ENJOY picking and devouring rich, ripe oranges, lemons, and limes. Make a rocket pocket with the peels of citrus for a quick pick me up of alertness.
- RELAX with a good book while you have the time. May I suggest *Be the Star You Are!*® which is filled with garden stories, tips, and humor.



Bird nest in a Crepe Myrtle tree, basket filling



Citrus Energizer: Lemon-limes

The "Love Fruit", navel oranges on the tree

www.bethestaryouare.com

- PICK a few stems from your camellia to enjoy in a floating bowl indoors.
- ADD color to your drab landscape by planting eye-popping primrose, cyclamen, or impatiens.
- REMEMBER our motto for the year is to Read, Plant, Grow. Do something every week toward that goal.
- LOVE your heart by eating healthy fresh greens, berries, and fruits combined with exercising, and thinking positively.

Where's the romance? Discover the pleasure of sensual scents for the senses to light Cupid's fire of desire with aphrodisiacs from your own personal paradise.



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and Happy Gardening to You.

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How to Create a Sustainable Downtown?

By Sophie Braccini



Lindsey, Molly and Emily Sharp enjoying downtown Photo Andy Scheck

Greening one's home is an idea that most individuals can get their heads around; but as Lafayette studies how to re-invent its downtown, what will it take to make the design sustainable for generations to come? According to Sustainable Lafayette, a local non-profit group, one feature that makes Lafayette's Downtown Specific Plan unique is that it seeks to reduce the "environmental footprint" of future development. To better understand this concept and answer questions, Sustainable Lafayette is organizing an educational presentation on February 18, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at Our Savior's Lutheran Church - Fellowship Hall, 1035 Carol Lane in Lafayette.

Headlining the event will be Lafayette resident Thomas Chastain, of STUDIO URBIS, an expert in sustainable architecture and urban design who has been serving on the Lafayette Planning Commission for five years. Chastain, who incorporated the environment into his projects even before it began to be called sustainability, will first define the concept. "Sustainability for a city in-

corporates many aspects, some big, some small." says Chastain, "it's thinking about how things work together." For example, looking at alternative ways of getting around, making it easier for those who want to ride a bike or promote local shopping. "What also really helps is to create a space where people can get together as community," adds Chastain, "Think about a formal town square or market place, a space where residents exist together and exchange ideas."



Dining al fresco

Photo Andy Scheck

As a member of the Planning Commission, Chastain participated in the process that led to the recommendations the Commission presented to the City. He believes that the draft of the Downtown Specific Plan contains elements that are very positive, but he has noticed that many residents still have concerns about such issues as maintaining the city's character or improving the traffic situation. "What is good about this process is that it got people thinking, whether they live in the downtown or not," says Chastain, "they understand that they will be impacted. Their concerns are a positive thing."

"Does (the Downtown Specific Plan) mean that buildings will be smaller ... or we will have to give up our cars and start riding bicycles?" asks Bart Carr, one of the founders of Sustainable Lafayette, "not really, but the Plan does suggest changes to the design and height of buildings, a new mix of development 'uses,' increasing creekside parks and walkways, and other changes that, if made over time, will make Lafayette's downtown more interesting, vibrant and much more 'sustainable'."

Chastain's talk will be followed by short presentations from city staff describing the specific plan adoption process and from Sustainable Lafayette members who will share why they believe a sustainable downtown plan is important to the Lafayette community. The event is free and open to the public.

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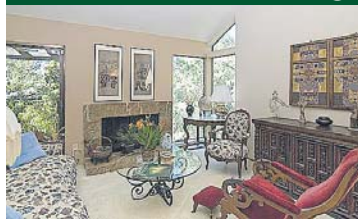


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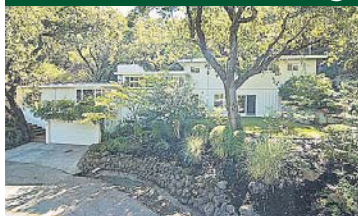


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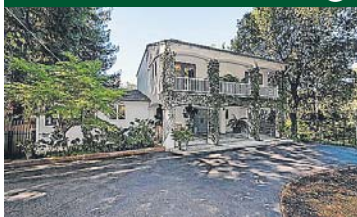


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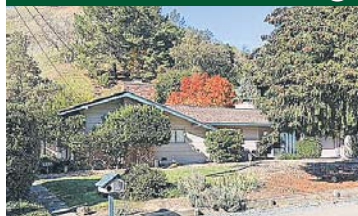


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