

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 04 Issue 14 Wednesday, September 15, 2010



Native Garden Blossoms

Back Yard Makeovers: Edible and Drinkable

By Cathy Tyson



Bill and Mary Massarweh's upper level seating area, nestled next to their vineyard in Moraga.

Photos Doug Kohen

Change is good, whether it's a new outfit, paint color or politician. Who doesn't get tired of looking at the same old thing? Two Lamorinda families decided to take the plunge and remodel their less than ideal back yards. Both sets of homeowners are quite pleased with the outcomes; one chose a water-wise organic sustainable garden, the other completely renovated an aging patio, installed terraces up the sloping site and topped it all off with pinot noir grape vines.

The Drinkable

Bill and Mary Massarweh have a steep up-sloping lot in Moraga that backs up

to open space. When they moved there in 1979 it was "weeds, weeds, weeds," says Bill Massarweh. They have two boys, now grown, who entertained themselves in the backyard and beyond, venturing as far as Sanders Ranch. Between the kids and the unfenced yard that was an open invitation to deer, and the occasional lost cow, they kept the hillside portion of their property as the developer left it – littered with pine trees for a number of years. Finally "enough is enough" said Mary, it was time to pursue their vision of a bit of Tuscany in the back yard.

... continued on page OH4

Kurt Piper presents...

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Burton Valley Beauty

An expanded 1963 ranch style home in the popular Burton Valley neighborhood, this beautifully remodeled 4 bedroom 2 bathroom home offers 1914 sq. ft. of interior living space with a wonderful family friendly floor plan including brand new kitchen, spacious family room, living room and two separate dining areas.

Situated on a professionally landscaped .28 acre lot, the property has lovely curb-appeal created by its lush green lawn and flower beds. The private park-like yard is perfect to enjoy al fresco dining on the back yard patio surrounded by natural beauty...an ideal setting for entertaining and barbeques with friends and family.

Considered close-in Burton Valley, the location is an easy walk to the regional trail and a short drive to Burton Valley Elementary school, downtown Lafayette, Stanley Intermediate school and highway 24/BART.

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Lamorinda Weekly

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Absolutely Charming Traditional! Desirable Happy Valley Glen, Near Town & BART 4 BR 3+ BA 2 Offices Nice Yard & Pool Offered at \$1,195,000

Back Yard Makeovers: Edible and Drinkable

... continued from page OH1

Photos right: Artistic circular staircase marks entrance to hillside garden.

*Below: Mary and Bill Massarweh
Bottom row: Table grapes grown with pinot noir vines, water feature and pomegranate from fruit tree.*



They had made some inquiries over the years with landscape designers but were not impressed. “They came up with ordinary designs - we never wanted to do anything ordinary,” said Bill. With the help of Owner /Designer Steve Lambert of Garden Lights the couple found a designer who shared their dream. Input also came from a cousin who suggested adding wine grapes and their son, now a landscape architect, who recommended a seating area high up on the hill and ideas to re-vamp the front yard as well.

Now the property has an incredible array of unique

plants, almond, pomegranate, peach, olive and lemon trees along with a dramatic water feature, fire pits and an outdoor kitchen united by a flagstone patio and spectacular walkway that winds up the hill.

It took seven months, with a month off during the rainy season, to completely transform the half acre property. Bill sums it up, “You can spend money on a painting that’s one dimensional – you look at it to enjoy it. In other words, the experience is one of ‘duality’ – you and the picture. With the garden there is no duality – you are in the picture, listening to the water, enjoying the

birds, smelling the flowers.” The Massarwehs absolutely love their garden.

Soon enough the couple will be enjoying their wine as well. The 200 pinot noir vines are expected to produce between ten and twelve cases of wine. Bill, who is President of the Lamorinda Winegrowers Association, notes that the southwestern exposure gives the vines plenty of sunshine. The 2008 inaugural vintage is bottled, the 2009 is aging in a French oak barrel, and the 2010 harvest is yet to come; the balance of the yard is fully developed, lush and ready for enjoyment right now.

... continued on page OH6

Location, Location and Views



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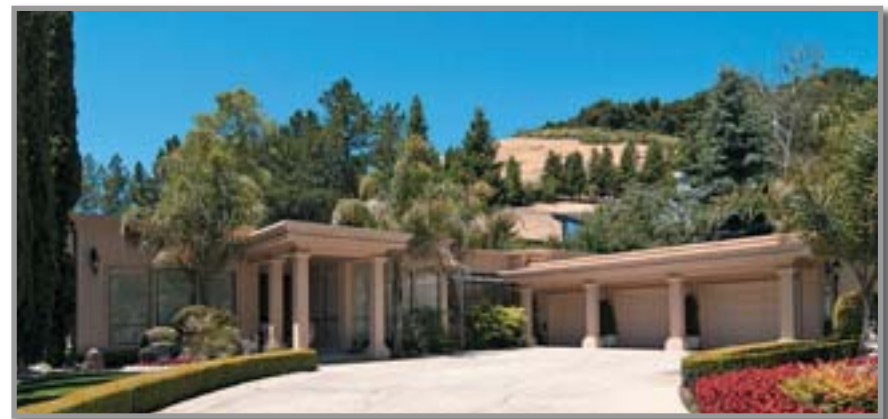
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A Member Of Real Living

Back Yard Makeovers: Edible and Drinkable

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Rows of organic heirloom tomatoes in Beth Ferree and John Eaton's backyard.

Photos Doug Kohen

The Edible

Beth Ferree and husband John Eaton have a flat and sunny one-third acre lot near the heart of Lafayette.

Although they loved the expansive back lawn that their children – twins, now in their late 20's – spent endless hours enjoying when they were younger, these empty

nesters were interested in something more productive that would use significantly less water.

"It was exhausting, a huge job," explains Ferree, recalling when she and her husband ripped out the original front yard and replaced it with natives and drought tolerant plants. All along the couple considered taking the back lawn out, but after surviving the front yard transformation, the task seemed daunting.

Hello Urban Farmers, goodbye lawn. The couple applied and was selected to participate in the Urban Farmers (UF) program – where the homeowner supplies the land and water and UF provides the labor and know-how to design, cultivate and harvest an organic garden – sharing the bounty with the collective. They tilled the lawn under and installed a multitude of three foot by fifteen foot beds with drip irrigation.

A cover crops of fava beans were planted to help break up the clay soil and add nutrients; their first season forty heirloom tomato plants were planted along with fruit trees, an herb garden, and a bee hive that the family pooch, Aslan, keeps an eye on. Although they are still working to naturally enrich the soil there is already a bountiful crop from the beds.

"We just love it. I feel like we are in Italy – it's beautiful, fun and the water bill is down substantially," says Ferree. "My kids think we've turned into hippies." She explains it really isn't that hard, Urban Farmers made it easy – but you can do it yourself.



Nearly ripe tomatoes



Buzzing bee hive



Beth Ferree with Aslan.

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August 2010	Lafayette	Moraga	Orinda
Days on Market	53	59	58
Average Sold Price	\$1,272,000	\$1,272,000	\$1,156,000
Number of detached homes sold	24	13	23

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Sustainable Lafayette Presents TomorrowLand

Take a peek into the future at the Lafayette Art and Wine Festival this weekend

By Sophie Braccini



Faucet by Grohe. Low-flow faucet. Available in several styles Photos Doug Kohen

What will the sustainable home of the future look like? Visitors to this weekend's Lafayette Art and Wine Festival will have a chance to gaze into the crystal ball by stopping by Sustainable Lafayette's TomorrowLand.

TomorrowLand is a home-like exhibit with a family/living room, kitchen, bathroom, outdoor space, and transportation zone; each area will be loaded with products, samples, and ideas that use energy, water, and waste more efficiently; all to ensure that the home of the future is far more environmentally-friendly than the typical suburban home of today. 'Sustainable Man' will be in the house to answer questions.

The TomorrowLand display will be front and center at the Festival, across from the Round Up. In each of the mock-home areas, techniques and materials will be displayed for visitors to look at, touch and ask questions about. "In the booth visitors will see different types of sustainable floorings and counter tops, a 'no garbage' kitchen, electronically monitored energy saving devices, ultra efficient smart appliances, built-in grey water collection, whole house energy management systems, sealed crawl space and many more real systems and props," says Sustainable Lafayette co-founder Steve Richard.

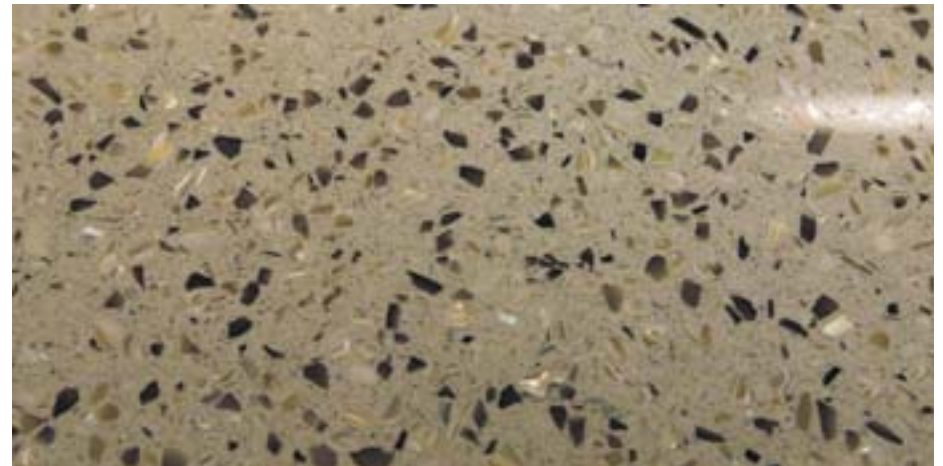
"It will probably take at least ten years for the rest of the world to catch up with all this, but everything is already available here in Lafayette," states

Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jay Lifson, "we are lucky to have such innovative people in our community."

"We've done extensive research on how the concept is viewed all over the country," says Richard, adding that the display would not be possible without the sponsorship of Mechanics Bank. "Our bank has been sponsoring the Festival for many years," says office manager Debbie Cooper, "This year we wanted to support a local non-profit. Sustainable Lafayette, that brings awareness about sustainability to residents and businesses, is a perfect choice."

The project is the result of collaboration between Lifson, Richards, Cooper, and other partners such as Leila Douglass, of Douglass Designs, and James Wright of Net Zero Energy Architects.

In addition, Lafayette Tree and Landscape will create a 10x10 sustainable garden of the future with rain water collection, composting, smart irrigation, solar lights, solar oven, native plants and a wind turbine. A personal care section will present products that people will use routinely and that are already available today. "We have been working with local business owners to carry out the display," says Richard, "including Terry Ring Construction, Inc., C&M Party Props, Nerd4Rent, Dolan's Lumber, Moraga Hardware & Lumber, Diablo Foods, Open Sesame, Sharp Bicycle, Blodgett's Floor Covering, and Springwood Builders."



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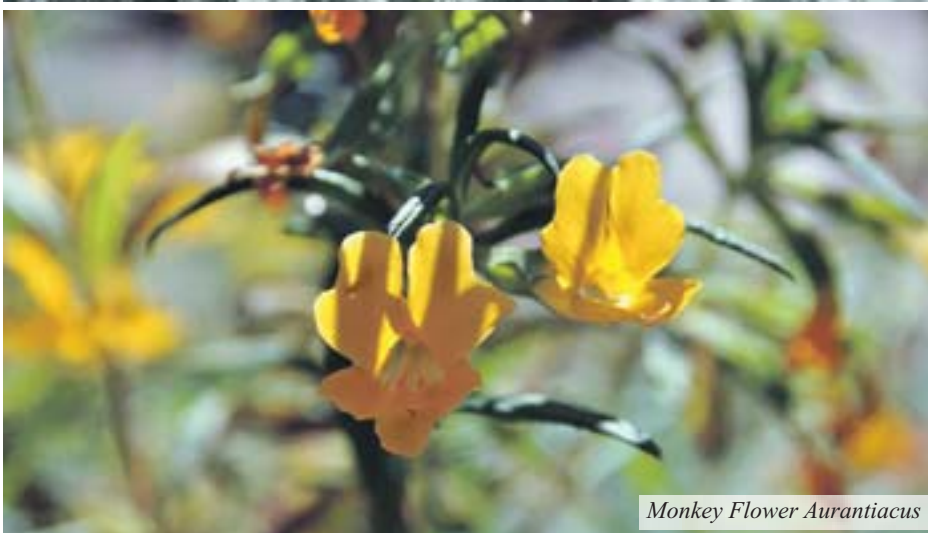
California Fuchsia (Zauschmeria) and Tancetum



Aster sp.



Salvia Regua and Aster sp.



Monkey Flower Aurantiacus



California Fuchsia (Zauschmeria)

Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

LAFAYETTE Last reported: 17
 LOWEST AMOUNT: \$615,500
 HIGHEST AMOUNT: \$2,795,000

MORAGA Last reported: 12
 LOWEST AMOUNT: \$289,000
 HIGHEST AMOUNT: \$1,500,000

ORINDA Last reported: 10
 LOWEST AMOUNT: \$499,000
 HIGHEST AMOUNT: \$1,753,000

LAFAYETTE

856 Acalanes Road, \$730,000, 4 Bdrms, 1972 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 8-11-10; Previous Sale: \$860,000, 11-22-06
 3300 Betty Lane, \$825,000, 4 Bdrms, 1739 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 8-11-10; Previous Sale: \$640,500, 03-31-08
 3408 Echo Springs Road, \$2,700,000, 5 Bdrms, 4867 SqFt, 2001 YrBlt, 8-13-10; Previous Sale: \$2,700,000, 02-22-06
 3815 Happy Valley Road, \$2,795,000, 4 Bdrms, 4807 SqFt, 1938 YrBlt, 8-11-10
 1111 Howard Hills Road, \$801,000, 3 Bdrms, 2811 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 8-18-10; Previous Sale: \$1,395,000, 10-12-05
 3397 La Caminita, \$1,420,000, 5 Bdrms, 3260 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 8-20-10; Previous Sale: \$1,650,000, 08-22-07
 3101 La Playa Court, \$615,500, 3 Bdrms, 2096 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 8-13-10; Previous Sale: \$55,000, 03-02-73
 681 Moraga Road, \$1,795,000, 4 Bdrms, 3797 SqFt, 1987 YrBlt, 8-11-10
 892 Mountain View Drive, \$1,290,000, 5 Bdrms, 3214 SqFt, 1946 YrBlt, 8-17-10; Previous Sale: \$36,000, 04-17-75
 3932 North Peardale Drive, \$1,800,000, 3 Bdrms, 2558 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 8-17-10; Previous Sale: \$425,000, 03-15-96
 945 Oak View Circle, \$640,000, 3 Bdrms, 1617 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 8-6-10; Previous Sale: \$925,000, 05-02-07
 1188 Pleasant Hill Circle, \$875,000, 5 Bdrms, 2007 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 8-13-10; Previous Sale: \$787,000, 11-19-03
 942 Raintree Place, \$1,150,000, 4 Bdrms, 2710 SqFt, 1983 YrBlt, 8-19-10; Previous Sale: \$530,000, 07-19-94
 3980 South Peardale Drive, \$1,620,000, 3 Bdrms, 2461 SqFt, 1947 YrBlt, 8-19-10; Previous Sale: \$640,000, 10-03-95
 3370 Stage Coach Drive, \$1,729,000, 4 Bdrms, 4069 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 8-17-10; Previous Sale: \$2,000,000, 06-27-06
 1231 Sunset Loop, \$929,000, 3 Bdrms, 2066 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 8-13-10; Previous Sale: \$810,000, 06-30-03
 1023 Timothy Lane, \$1,575,000, 4 Bdrms, 3955 SqFt, 1986 YrBlt, 8-6-10

MORAGA

2059 Ascot Drive #211, \$289,000, 2 Bdrms, 1193 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 8-13-10; Previous Sale: \$142,000, 08-15-96
 63 Carr Drive, \$1,115,000, 5 Bdrms, 2660 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 8-20-10; Previous Sale: \$971,000, 12-05-03
 13 Doral Drive, \$740,000, 2 Bdrms, 2142 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 8-13-10; Previous Sale: \$805,000, 07-11-08
 1054 Larch Avenue, \$529,000, 2 Bdrms, 1329 SqFt, 1930 YrBlt, 8-6-10; Previous Sale: \$16,000, 09-21-70
 1265 Larch Avenue, \$800,000, 4 Bdrms, 1910 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 8-17-10; Previous Sale: \$519,000, 05-22-98
 8 Merrill Drive, \$1,500,000, 4 Bdrms, 3260 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 8-6-10
 716 Moraga Road, \$790,000, 4 Bdrms, 2218 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 8-19-10; Previous Sale: \$275,000, 08-13-87
 265 Scofield Drive, \$1,095,000, 4 Bdrms, 2786 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 8-6-10; Previous Sale: \$520,000, 08-21-91
 157 Shuey Drive, \$723,000, 3 Bdrms, 1885 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 8-16-10; Previous Sale: \$97,000, 02-28-77
 125 Walford Drive, \$900,000, 3 Bdrms, 2385 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 8-13-10; Previous Sale: \$570,000, 07-30-01
 39 Wandel Drive, \$670,000, 3 Bdrms, 1498 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 8-6-10
 48 Woodford Drive, \$750,000, 4 Bdrms, 1840 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 8-13-10; Previous Sale: \$640,000, 08-22-02

ORINDA

10 Alta Vista Drive, \$499,000, 6 Bdrms, 2560 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 8-6-10
 139 Ardith Drive, \$951,500, 3 Bdrms, 1633 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 8-9-10; Previous Sale: \$939,000, 09-26-05
 11 Estates Drive, \$1,125,000, 4 Bdrms, 3252 SqFt, 1940 YrBlt, 8-6-10
 28 Lost Valley Drive, \$945,000, 4 Bdrms, 2338 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 8-18-10; Previous Sale: \$350,000, 06-15-88
 20 Mira Loma Road, \$817,500, 2 Bdrms, 2110 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 8-6-10; Previous Sale: \$869,000, 08-19-04
 12 Monterey Terrace, \$1,753,000, 4 Bdrms, 4234 SqFt, 1991 YrBlt, 8-17-10; Previous Sale: \$899,000, 11-14-90
 42 Oak Road, \$900,000, 3 Bdrms, 2676 SqFt, 1998 YrBlt, 8-13-10; Previous Sale: \$70,000, 04-30-96
 10 Penny Lane, \$1,635,000, 3 Bdrms, 3011 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 8-10-10; Previous Sale: \$925,000, 11-17-99
 105 Rheem Boulevard, \$550,000, 3 Bdrms, 1788 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 8-18-10; Previous Sale: \$659,000, 02-06-04
 6989 Skyline Boulevard, \$1,010,000, 5 Bdrms, 3502 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 8-18-10; Previous Sale: \$649,000, 05-09-00



Lamorinda Home Sales recorded is also available on our web site www.lamorindaweekly.com. Go to "Archive" if you're looking for an older listing. You will find a link to the list under each issue.

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.

Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

LAFAYETTE

3103 Del Oceano Drive, 94549, Aurora Loan Services, 08-19-10, \$712,914, 1757 sf, 4 bd

ORINDA

241 Courtney Lane, 94563, Chevy Chase Bank, 08-16-10, \$535,287, 2214 sf, 4 bd

Tips for Selling Your Home in the Fall

By Val Cook-Watkins

Summer is coming to an end which means the leaves will start changing, the weather will begin cooling and we'll all be spending more time inside our homes. It may also be the time of year when you begin wondering if you truly want to stay in your home. Many sellers think that fall is a bad time to put their home on the market but, as real estate experts will tell you, that's simply not the case.

Autumn is typically a

popular time of year for corporations to relocate associates, which creates a pool of buyers who need to make quick decisions about housing. They'll be serious about purchasing and, with fewer houses on the market and less competition for sellers, your house may get more attention than it would any other time of year. So what can you do to make sure your home sells before all the leaves fall off the trees? Here are a few helpful tips.

- Highlight the location. Bring the benefits of your location front and center. Establish a list of perks that your property offers, such as proximity to public transportation, schools, shopping, recreation or entertainment.
- Use the season for curb appeal. Autumn is one of the most beautiful times of year and by using that to your advantage, your home can stand out from others in the neighborhood. Leaves turning

shades of crimson and gold can add extra appeal to the total look of your home's exterior, but they can also get out of hand. Make sure trees and shrubs are properly groomed and that fallen leaves don't suffocate your front lawn. Add pumpkins, gourds or a fall display to your front porch to invite in potential buyers.

- Stage your home. Buyers need to be able to envision themselves living in your home before they will consider buying it. By de-cluttering, de-personalizing and thoroughly cleaning the entire house, prospective buyers will immediately imagine their furniture in the rooms and photos on the walls. Also, don't be afraid to liven up the home by bringing the outside indoors during this beautiful season. If your dining room is a sea of beige, set up a vase of twigs, leaves or acorns from your yard.

- Get everything in tip-top shape. Your buyer will most likely hire an inspector before closing, so talk to your Realtor about finding one who'll visit your home before you put it on the market to avoid any surprises. Pay close attention to elements around the home that are important in the fall. For example, make sure gutters are cleared of fallen leaves and that fireplaces are in working order.
- Know your home. Access to real estate information on

the Internet means that buyers are walking into your home more educated than ever. Take the time to review homes similar to yours on real estate websites

like www.californiamoves.com or www.realtor.com. Your agent will also be able to keep you aware of the conditions and price ranges of other homes for sale in your area. This will allow you to better negotiate with potential buyers.

- Hire a tech savvy Realtor. We're living in an age when nearly everyone owns a cell phone and 90 percent of home buyers use the internet during their home search. Instant information and communication have become the norm in our society, so Realtors are taking advantage of today's tech tools to reach prospective buyers quickly and effectively. A tech savvy agent will work with cell phone applications, Websites, digital cameras and much more to be able to connect you with the right buyer for your home.

Despite what you may have heard, this time of year offers plenty of opportunity to sell your home. By taking a few simple steps to make sure you and your house are ready to hit the market, you can better prepare yourself for what is to come. After all, the more welcoming your home is to possible buyers, the more welcoming it will be to offers.

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Val Cook-Watkins, Manager of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage's Orinda offices, provides the above tips. A 30-year real estate veteran, Watkins oversees a talented team of 78 real estate professionals in the East Bay. Her offices are located at 5 Moraga Way and 2 Theatre Square, Suite 211, in Orinda. She can be reached at 925-253-4600 or by e-mail at vcCookwatkins@cbnorcal.com.

Lamorinda's Leading Independent Real Estate Firm.



42 Bates Blvd.
Turnkey condition, level lot w/panoramic views. Remodeled kitchen/family room, 3bd/2ba. Convenient location, minutes to freeway, schools, shopping.
Offered at \$819,000



5 Kenmore Court
This house works for you! Solar panels & in-law unit w/full kitchen allows you to put money back in to your pocket! 1/19 beautiful acre lot, 2500 sf 4bd/3 full baths.
Offered at \$1,095,000



68 La Cuesta Road
Live large in this spacious contemporary home. Experience sweeping views of romantic sunsets. Prime country club location nr town, Bart & great schools. Italian designer interior.
Offered at \$1,449,000



53 Knickerbocker Lane
Beautiful Craftsman style remodeled 2005 on spectacular 1/2 acre, quiet cul-de-sac near commute. 4bd + office, 3340 sf, fab 3-car garage. Lovely built-ins.
Offered at \$1,525,000



105 Meadow Lane
Fabulous remodeled shingled house with vaulted ceilings & skylights. Lvl backyard, Sunset Magazine garden design winner in 2005. Grt schools. www.thekaufmans.com
Offered at \$1,565,000



136 Manzanita Drive
Spectacular newly built 4000 sf custom Santa Barbara style home seldom found in the area. 4bd/3.5ba of incredible design & custom appointments. A world of charm!
Offered at \$2,495,000



15 Van Tassel Lane
Splendid quality features in & out. Lux yet comfortable gated Sleepy Hollow 5bd/4.5ba estate home. Exquisite details, top quality amenities, grassy yards, pool & gardens.
Offered at \$2,695,000



1365B Camino Peral
Comfortable 2bd/2ba, 1281 sf with fireplace, washer/dryer, deck & 2 dedicated parking spaces. Near shopping, park, library and trails. Best schools!
Offered at \$339,000



1087 Sanders Drive
Classic Moraga rancher. Thoroughly updated, new kitchen, baths, dual panes, new doors, decorator colors. Lvl corner lot w/great curb appeal. Near top-rated schools.
Offered at \$749,000



20 Kazar Court
Special custom upgrades & pride of ownership! 4/2.5 cul-de-sac rancher w/hdwd floors, triple-paned windows, plantation shutters & great curb appeal. Patio & terraced landscaping.
Offered at \$899,000



1904 Russell Drive
Very special "Bluffs" 2675 sf home w/5bd/3ba. Level corner lot, stylish touches, remodeled kitchen and baths. Patio with pergola, master bath with steam shower.
Offered at \$1,225,000



1014 Katherine Lane
New Year! New Price! Updated 4bd/3ba rancher, .30 ac pvt corner lot, open floor plan for entertaining & everyday living, lg Trex deck. Best value in Lafayette!
Offered at \$949,000



612 Huntleigh Drive
Burton Valley beauty. Just remodeled 4bd/2ba rancher, move-in ready. Single level, hdwd floors, new dual panes, beautiful front & back yard landscaping.
Offered at \$1,035,000



1176 Glen Road
\$100,000 price reduction! Absolutely charming 4bd in desirable Happy Valley Glen. Great neighborhood close to town. Top rated schools. 2nd office. Private yd with pool.
Offered at \$1,195,000



3407 Shangri La Road
Fabulous Craftsman style built in 2005. Stunning architecture, beautiful craftsmanship, all the finest features and amenities. Serene 1+ ac in Reliez Valley. Patios, lawns.
Offered at \$1,650,000



3724 St. Francis Drive
Beautiful sgl lvl 4bd/2.5ba home in Rose Lane area of Happy Valley. Thoughtfully designed & updated. Lovely yard with vineyard, waterfall, pond, gardens, view of hills.
Offered at \$1,675,000

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