

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 04 Issue 22 Wednesday, January 5, 2011



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian ...read on page OH4

Exploring a Custom Wine Cellar

By Cathy Tyson



Photo Doug Kohen



Vickie and Jeff Martin

Photo Cathy Tyson

About seven years ago when Vickie and Jeff Martin were remodeling their Moraga home, they thought the odd space that lead to their basement and a furnace could be converted into a wine cellar. By rearranging the area, and cannibalizing some subterranean space under a stairwell, they were able to create a custom wine cellar that officially accommodates 1,200 bottles. The ever-growing collection has spilled over into an adjacent tasting area; Jeff jokes, “we need to start drinking more.”

They wanted to give the space an old world look, reflected in the dark wood and wrought iron leaf details. A cooling system keeps the cellar at a constant temperature of 56 degrees just right for storage. A variety of decanters and a lovely antique cabinet, purchased locally, along with overflow wine bottles and a sink round out the space.

Jeff is the primary wine enthusiast of the family, having been interested in wine for the past twenty years. Son Tyler shares his fascination; he’s a wine and viticulture major with a concentration in enology at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo; he hopes to go into the wine business. Younger brother Cole, a sophomore business major at University of Colorado, Boulder, is not a wine fan at this point in his life. ... continued on page OH3

Happy New Year!!!

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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

LAFAYETTE	Last reported: 4
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$385,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$960,000
MORAGA	Last reported: 6
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$342,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,187,000
ORINDA	Last reported: 16
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$540,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,115,000

Home sales are compiled by CalREsource, 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

871 Acalanes Road, \$720,000, 4 Bdrms, 2291 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 12-9-10
 1363 El Curtola Boulevard, \$680,000, 4 Bdrms, 2460 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 12-10-10; Previous Sale: \$366,000, 05-22-97
 1516 El Sombro, \$880,000, 4 Bdrms, 2186 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 12-10-10
 3280 Marlene Drive, \$385,000, 3 Bdrms, 1160 SqFt, 1981 YrBlt, 12-1-10; Previous Sale: \$157,000, 01-10-90
 131 Marsha Place, \$950,000, 5 Bdrms, 2493 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 12-1-10; Previous Sale: \$937,500, 11-21-00
 3279 Mt. Diablo Court #3, \$410,000, 2 Bdrms, 1332 SqFt, 1986 YrBlt, 11-30-10
 3876 Quail Ridge Road, \$960,000, 4 Bdrms, 2694 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 12-1-10

MORAGA

475 Chalda Way, \$342,000, 2 Bdrms, 1170 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 12-10-10; Previous Sale: \$127,500, 10-31-88
 195 Miramonte Drive, \$405,000, 2 Bdrms, 1514 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 12-8-10
 1904 Russell Drive, \$1,187,000, 3 Bdrms, 2675 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 12-3-10; Previous Sale: \$425,000, 01-09-97

ORINDA

18 Berkeley Avenue, \$420,000, 3 Bdrms, 1353 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 12-8-10; Previous Sale: \$759,000, 03-29-05
 50 Ardilla Road, \$1,115,000, 4 Bdrms, 2273 SqFt, 1928 YrBlt, 12-1-10; Previous Sale: \$365,000, 12-28-89
 11 Bates Boulevard, \$810,000, 4 Bdrms, 1789 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 11-30-10; Previous Sale: \$495,000, 12-08-99
 19 Calvin Drive, \$540,000, 4 Bdrms, 1642 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 11-30-10; Previous Sale: \$540,000, 06-14-10
 56 Donna Maria Way, \$740,000, 3 Bdrms, 1610 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 12-2-10; Previous Sale: \$975,000, 07-19-05
 18 Francisco Court, \$650,000, 2 Bdrms, 1189 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 12-10-10; Previous Sale: \$702,000, 10-30-09
 5 Glorietta Court, \$690,000, 5 Bdrms, 2538 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 12-3-10; Previous Sale: \$890,000, 04-22-03
 2 Harran Circle, \$350,000, 4 Bdrms, 2128 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 12-7-10
 148 Ivy Drive, \$1,015,000, 4 Bdrms, 2337 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 11-30-10
 73 La Cuesta Road, \$835,000, 3 Bdrms, 1963 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 12-10-10
 28 Los Amigos, \$585,000, 4 Bdrms, 2275 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 12-3-10
 58 Lucille Way, \$900,000, 4 Bdrms, 2638 SqFt, 2004 YrBlt, 11-30-10
 294 Orchard Road, \$875,000, 4 Bdrms, 3375 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 12-10-10
 314 Overhill Road, \$1,051,500, 3 Bdrms, 2406 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 12-6-10; Previous Sale: \$1,095,000, 09-09-03
 214 Rheem Boulevard, \$457,000, 4 Bdrms, 1420 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 12-6-10; Previous Sale: \$300,000, 04-11-96
 60 Southwood Drive, \$810,000, 3 Bdrms, 2019 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 12-10-10; Previous Sale: \$835,000, 05-23-03

Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

LAFAYETTE

630 Francis Drive, 94549, HSBC Bank, 06-14-10, \$580,000, 2180 sf, 3 bd
 708 Wee Donegal, 94549, Aurora Loan Services, 11-19-10, \$771,913, 2190 sf, 4 bd

ORINDA

403 Dalewood Drive, 94563, Bank of America, 12-02-10, \$1,203,187, 6502 sf, 4 bd

Exploring a Custom Wine Cellar

... continued from page OH1



Photo Doug Kohen

Vickie focuses her attention on their property in Sonoma that's planted with chardonnay grapes, "I oversee the Vineyard Manager," she explains. Their grapes are sold to the Schug Carneros Estate Winery and end up in Carneros Chardonnay. Oddly enough her favorite wines are Sonoma County chardonnays.

The Martin's are on a number of winery and retailer mailing lists, so the wine keeps accumulating. "It's a buyers market, some limited releases just aren't selling like they used to," he said. Two favorites are Shafer Vineyards Hillside Select and Saxum Vineyards – known for their Rhone blends.

His goal for the new year – get more organized, "It's the bane of anybody who collects – most don't have a good grasp on their inventory." While the cellar is organized by type of wine, chardonnays here, cabernets there, then arranged alphabetically by producer within those categories, it's difficult to determine which vintages are ready to drink and which should age longer.

Some folks enjoy collecting stamps, snow globes or Pez dispensers – perhaps it's the lure of finding something rare and unique. For the Martin family, collecting and sharing their delicious drinkable bounty with friends and family is its own reward.

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January 2011 - Digging Deep

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian-Goals for the Garden

"The doctor can bury his mistakes but an architect can only advise his client to plant vines." - Frank Lloyd Wright

Every year at this time I spend hours of coaching sessions helping clients create goals for the upcoming year. The beginning of a new year excites one to give birth to new ideas and design a vision for the future. Unfortunately by February 1, statistics indicate that most people have abandoned their goals. Resolutions can be set and accomplished all year long when you make SMART goals. SMART stands for

SPECIFIC

MEASURABLE

ACHIEVABLE

RELEVANT

TIMELY

Recently while I was working with a regular client, she asked me if I would help her set her garden goals for the year. Of course, I was delighted and after writing my own garden goals, I felt the exercise would be worthwhile for the loyal readers of Digging Deep. Last year I modeled this gardening column after my motto, Read, Plant, Grow. This year I propose Explore, Experiment, Experience.

Now that it is winter, the inclement weather presents the perfect opportunity to design our dreams. There is little manual labor to be done outdoors. It's time to exercise our brains, explore the possibilities, and decide how we want our landscapes to serve us for the future.

Let me begin by describing the steps to SMART goals. When creating SMART goals for your garden, always ask yourself, "what do I mean by that?"

1. SPECIFIC-Planting rosemary, thyme, sage, basil, and oregano is specific, while wanting an herb garden is not.

2. MEASURABLE-Planting rosemary, thyme, sage, basil, and oregano the third weekend of May is measurable. Your actions must be calculable so you know when you have achieved success. We can not measure "wants".

3. ACHIEVABLE-Planting rosemary, thyme, sage, basil, and oregano the third weekend of May so that I'll have a bounty of flavorful herbs for my 4th of July barbecue is achievable. Be realistic about what you can truly accomplish. Success breeds success. When we set

goals that are reachable, we feel competent.

4. RELEVANT-Planting rosemary, thyme, sage, basil, and oregano the third weekend of May so that I'll have a bounty of flavorful herbs for my 4th of July barbecue to enhance the tasty enjoyment and continued health of my family and guests is relevant. To be relevant, the goal must really matter to you. If you don't have a good reason for doing it, you'll drop the goal after a few weeks of attempts.

5. TIMELY-Planting rosemary, thyme, sage, basil, and oregano the third weekend of May so that I'll have a bounty of flavorful herbs for my 4th of July barbecue to enhance the tasty enjoyment and continued health of my family and guests plus savor a summer of palatable satisfaction provides an end point. Even if you want to have a goal forever, put an end date to a cycle, then start anew when accomplished.

What's on your list of things that you've always wanted in your backyard but never had the time, money, or inclination to accomplish? A sampling of suggestions besides planting your herbs may include creating, adding, building, buying, cleaning, or planting

- A butterfly garden
- A cutting garden
- A vegetable plot
- A barbecue box
- A meditation meadow
- Attractions for birds, bees, and hummingbirds
- Pathways to paradise
- A perennial patch
- Play structures
- Swings from giant trees
- Relaxation regions
- Benches and outdoor sitting rooms
- Space, mood, and spotlighting
- Ponds, waterfalls, fountains, and water features
- Compost bins or piles
- Succulents and cactus
- Endemic, natural specimens
- Fruit orchard
- Vineyard
- Seasonal bulbs



A scarlet tipped chartreuse cymbidium paired with bluish bergenia blossoms brighten an indoor hall.

Photos Cynthia Brian



Narcissus mingled with Russian Sage brighten the winter landscape with beauty and perfume.

- Fire pit
- Outdoor kitchen and dining area
- Trellises and arbors
- Sculpture scenario
- Aviary
- Hillside wine cellar
- Rock wall
- Patio, deck, retaining walls
- Rain garden
- All weather furniture
- Hammock hanging
- Sport court
- Animal enclosures
- Junk pile
- Library of garden books

One of the items on my agenda for the year is to enrich my vegetable garden with compost, mulch, legume planting, and crop rotation. The date for each task is chronicled and I have written down in my gardening journal the specifics, how I will measure, achieve, be realistic, and time my endeavors. My reward will be a healthy harvest of delectable freshness that I'll be able to share with family, friends, and colleagues.



Purple Lilac Vine is a colorful winter blooming vine for fences, walls, and arbors. (Hardenbergia violaceae)



Beets ready to harvest along with winter greens.

Hard work, sacrifice, and commitment deserve applause. Create SMART garden goals and celebrate your diligence. Use the winter months to pause, relax, and reinvent while you become the architect of your dreamscape. Plant purple lilac vines (*Hardenbergia violaceae*) to cover those fences and walls that you want hidden in winter.

Writing your garden goals will enable you to realize your vision one step at a time. As Lewis Carol wrote in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will do." With SMART goals for your garden desires, you will create a road map to greener success harvesting happiness. Dreams are goals with timelines. Dream big and always write down your SMART garden goals. Then sit back, stay warm and relish the downtime of winter with a delectable cup of rose hip tea.

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Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for January

"Let nature be your teacher." - William Wordsworth

The narcissus perfume the chilly air with intoxicating scents, the sprouting mushrooms are fungus umbrellas for the garden fairies and tired rose bushes beg for branch reduction. With the merriment of the holidays now memories of a bygone season, we forge into the future with high hopes of a brighter economy and hospitable weather. With only a few things to do in the garden in January, perhaps you can settle in for a long winter's nap.

- **RECYCLE** your Christmas tree through the waste services program.
- **CUT** your final bouquets of roses and blooming perennials for indoor enjoyment.
- **PROTECT** plants from freezing by covering with tarps, blankets, or plastic.
- **PRUNE** your roses, berries, geraniums, fruit trees, crepe myrtles, and other woody perennials before the end of the month. This is the time for severe cutting.
- **SHARE** your rose canes with garden friends. After cutting the canes 12 inches or shorter, dip in a rooting solution before planting.
- **COMPOST** kitchen scraps, ashes, coffee, tree, and all organic materials.
- **READ** garden magazines and bulb catalogues.
- **DREAM** about the garden environment you've always wanted.
- **VISIT** winter gardens in other areas to gather ideas.
- **MOVE** Christmas azaleas and cactus to a patio or porch.
- **DECLUTTER** your shed or garage in anticipation of spring action.
- **SHARPEN** your tools, clean, oil, and store.
- **PLANT** color spots of cyclamen, azaleas, bergenia, and pansies.
- **MOVE** potted conifers outdoors in preparation for the next holidays.
- **PLAN** your garden. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Write SMART goals.
- **BUY** new rubber boots for those muddy slopes.
- **HARVEST** beets, potatoes, and turnips before the freezes.
- **ENJOY** the beautiful blossoms of cymbidium orchids in your home décor.
- **CELEBRATE** 2011 in style and with substance by being organic.

Remember, don't be intimidated by last year's mistakes. Failure is fertilizer. Throw your "malfatti's" on the compost pile and grow a new garden.

Explore, experiment, experience. Happy New Year!
Happy gardening to you!

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Cynthia Brian

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Cynthia is available as a speaker and consultant.



Village Associates Celebrates Ten Years in Lamorinda

By Lou Fancher



Top Row: Jeff Snell, Dan Weil, Clark Thompson, Steve Smith, Charles Levine
 2nd Row: Kurt Piper, Marianne Greene, Dexter Honens II, Hal Kaufman, Patty Battersby, Ignacio Vega
 3rd Row: Joan Evans, Karen Murphy, Margot Kaufman, Ashley Battersby, Margaret Zucker, Terri Bates Walker
 4th Row: Sue Layng, Linda Ehrich, Carol Stevenson (Office Manager), Pamela Halloran
 5th Row: Ann Ward, Joan Eggers, Joan Cleveland, Tara Rochlin
 Bottom Row: Ben Olsen, Sue Olsen, I. Bruce Maxon
 Not pictured: Linda Friedman, Debbie Johnston, Art Lehman, April Matthews, Judy Schoenrock, Ann Sharf, Lynda Snell
 Photo Andy Scheck

Village Associates is celebrating its 10th anniversary, but for founder Ignacio Vega, there's no looking back.

"The reason we came about is that a group of agents didn't want to become a part of a larger conglomerate," Vega said, reluctantly describing the real estate company's origins. "It really started off as casually as this: the core group decided to form their own agency. But really, I don't want to talk about how we started. The fact that we are still here ten years later is the real story."

Properly redirected, the interview turned to an exploration of why, according to Vega, the agency retains a 33% market share and has the number one highest dollar volume in Contra Costa County.

"In real estate it's all about relationships and knowledge," he said. "The core group of agents has had their lives, their families, right here, since the beginning."

Kurt Piper, a Village agent with 18 years in real estate, pointed to experience: "On average, our associates have 20 years of experience, which is a pretty impressive statistic. There's something to be said for that."

And Vega has a lot to say about his co-workers. "People seek us out as the local experts. Buying a house is not a commodity. It's not something you do on e-Bay. It's a life, a lifestyle. You add value if you are viewed as a local expert."

Both men believe the knowledge-bar has been raised by the internet.

"Today, a client profile is someone who is way more educated and aware about the [real estate] environment. They're so far down the stream and knowledgeable that as an agent, you had better be equally informed," Vega said.

Piper agreed, adding that in today's hi-tech world, "most buyers have already seen the property online before they set foot in the house. Because of this, the photos, descriptive text and virtual tour accessed online should be properly displayed so the buyer is excited about visiting the property."

With the internet offering easy communication between sellers and buyers, might some people forego using an agent? Vega and Piper jumped on this subject immediately.

"Buyers and sellers will hire a friend or a friend of a friend who is a newer agent or a part-timer and in some cases, when a transaction is at a critical stage, this agent can't draw on past experiences to give their client timely advice. I feel the experience of our Village Associates can save our clients money and lead to a less stressful or smoother transaction," Piper explained.

"For sale by owners, discount brokers, and companies trying to generate sales on a website, aren't that effective. Inevitably you have to be on the ground. You have to know the community," Vega said.

"And there's nothing like being in the car with someone, pointing things out, answering every question."

Village Associates hasn't simply sold to the community; they've invested in it. Each year the company supports local events: Lafayette's Art and Wine Festival, Orinda's Classic Car Show and Parade of Trees, and Moraga's Treeline Triathlon.

"We don't advertise it, but every year we deliver 75 food baskets—literally laundry baskets

stuffed with everything you need for a Thanksgiving dinner—to Children's Hospital in Oakland," Vega said. Social workers distribute the food to families temporarily staying in Oakland because their children are in the hospital.

Vega is perhaps most proud of the company's durability. "It's important to notice: we've gone through a couple of economic cycles and we've survived the extremes," he said, noting the unprecedented economic environment from 2003 to 2007. "The boom mentality created impressive wealth for an extended period of time. Since then, the whole upsetting of the economy has affected us, no doubt, but much less so than other areas."

As for the future, Vega is certain of one thing, saying, "I have no growth plans. I have one office and that's as far as it's going to go. You can dilute your image by spreading yourself out. Your mission changes when you try to expand. Suddenly you're doing things other than focusing on your core, which is serving this community."

On September 18, 2020, when the company celebrates a second decade in business, Vega and Piper expect they'll be doing the same job they do today: delivering in-your-hand, instantaneous information and working in real time, all the time.

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A New Year. A New Decade.

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We hope the next decade will be as positive as our first. We're grateful for the support we've received from our family, friends and neighbors along the way. And for that, we extend our sincere gratitude.

Thanks to everyone, from each of us.



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