

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 05 Issue 3 Wednesday, April 13, 2011



2011 Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour

Annual event will feature new gardens in Lafayette and Orinda

By Sophie Braccini

Alma Raymond wanted to see more Orinda homes featured on the annual Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour, so she approached Tour organizer Kathy Kramer about her new front yard; Raymond's will be one of three new gardens among the five Lamorinda sites on the 2011 Tour.

6,000 people are expected to attend this year's tour of over 50 gardens located throughout Alameda and Contra Costa counties that will be showcased on Sunday, May 1.

Raymond says she has been a California Native Plant Society member on and off since the early 1960's. But while she was working, she didn't have time to do anything about the grass and junipers that were the ornaments of her front garden. "When I retired, my first objective was to reduce our water use," explains Raymond, "then we also wanted to attract wild life and stop using fertilizer."

Lafayette's Betty Nelson had similar objectives. "I like the idea of native plants and wanted to stop using so much water and chemicals," says Nelson, "and a naturalistic-type garden fits better in this area of Lafayette." For Nelson the front garden is an outside room. She works for a biotech company and sometimes uses a home office that's adjacent to her front garden. "These types of garden are so much more interesting than lawns," she says, "I wanted to work with a landscape designer to get good design ideas and sources for plants." Nelson chose Four Dimensions Landscape in Oakland.

"There are different parts in the Raymonds' front garden," says Kim Larsen of Dragonfly Designs in Orinda, who help Raymond with her yard, "the left side is more woody looking, and in the top right front we have kept some of the original English garden plants that were there and mixed them with natives." The whole space was planted with native shrubs and perennials and sown with native flower seeds. ... continued on page F6



Alma Raymond in her back yard

Photo Sophie Braccini



Island Bush Poppy and Baby Blue Eyes in Al and Barbara Kyte's garden



Photo A. Scheck

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3764 Via Granada, Moraga



Completely remodeled and expanded Campolindo rancher. 4 bed/3.5 baths. Level yard with lawn, patio, sports court, dog run, fruit trees and hot tub. **\$1,098,000**

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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

Area	Last reported:
LAFAYETTE	6
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$410,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,700,000
MORAGA	9
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$139,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$940,000
ORINDA	11
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$480,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,580,000

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

3613 Chestnut Street, \$410,000, 2 Bdrms, 869 SqFt, 1941 YrBl, 3-14-11
1020 Circle Creek Lane, \$520,000, 4 Bdrms, 1359 SqFt, 1953 YrBl, 3-22-11;
Previous Sale: \$306,000, 12-17-98
3520 Eagle Point Road, \$1,700,000, 5 Bdrms, 2783 SqFt, 1961 YrBl, 3-18-11
727 Old Jonas Hill Road, \$1,149,500, 4 Bdrms, 2937 SqFt, 1976 YrBl, 3-8-11;
Previous Sale: \$645,000, 06-10-98
1360 Reliez Valley Road, \$817,000, 2 Bdrms, 1623 SqFt, 1949 YrBl, 3-11-11;
Previous Sale: \$1,300,000, 08-14-07
3399 Woodview Drive, \$520,000, 4 Bdrms, 2828 SqFt, 1974 YrBl, 3-9-11;
Previous Sale: \$1,098,000, 06-29-06

MORAGA

115 Ascot Court #B, \$220,000, 2 Bdrms, 1191 SqFt, 1973 YrBl, 3-21-11
2059 Ascot Drive #108, \$139,000, 1 Bdrms, 713 SqFt, 1971 YrBl, 3-14-11;
Previous Sale: \$339,000, 07-14-06
581 Augusta Drive, \$770,000, 3 Bdrms, 1963 SqFt, 1984 YrBl, 3-11-11;
Previous Sale: \$640,000, 10-27-98
98 Brookfield Drive, \$940,000, 5 Bdrms, 2273 SqFt, 1965 YrBl, 3-9-11;
Previous Sale: \$467,500, 10-21-94
516 Butterfield Place, \$615,000, 2 Bdrms, 1703 SqFt, 1966 YrBl, 3-8-11
2057 Donald Drive, \$750,000, 3973 SqFt, 1959 YrBl, 3-15-11;
Previous Sale: \$225,000, 11-06-80
132 Greenbriar, \$722,000, 3 Bdrms, 2470 SqFt, 1986 YrBl, 3-9-11;
Previous Sale: \$315,000, 05-15-87
1197 Larch Avenue, \$875,000, 4 Bdrms, 2102 SqFt, 1967 YrBl, 3-16-11;
Previous Sale: \$875,000, 07-17-03
1230 Larch Avenue, \$800,000, 5 Bdrms, 2465 SqFt, 1967 YrBl, 3-22-11

ORINDA

14 Camino Del Diablo, \$870,000, 2 Bdrms, 2466 SqFt, 1983 YrBl, 3-14-11;
Previous Sale: \$600,000, 10-30-92
356 Dalewood Drive, \$1,520,000, 3 Bdrms, 3429 SqFt, 1984 YrBl, 3-9-11;
Previous Sale: \$490,000, 06-14-85
23 Heather Lane, \$1,480,000, 4 Bdrms, 3184 SqFt, 1974 YrBl, 3-21-11;
Previous Sale: \$615,000, 02-03-98
101 Hillcrest Drive, \$846,000, 3 Bdrms, 1872 SqFt, 1952 YrBl, 3-16-11;
Previous Sale: \$360,000, 06-11-92
24 La Campana Road, \$1,580,000, 4 Bdrms, 3662 SqFt, 1939 YrBl, 3-15-11;
Previous Sale: \$2,225,000, 06-21-07
29 Las Piedras, \$480,000, 2 Bdrms, 1017 SqFt, 1951 YrBl, 3-11-11;
Previous Sale: \$725,000, 05-02-07
32 Los Dedos Road, \$795,500, 3 Bdrms, 2815 SqFt, 1974 YrBl, 3-16-11;
Previous Sale: \$750,000, 04-26-00
3 North Lane, \$699,000, 3 Bdrms, 2496 SqFt, 1956 YrBl, 3-22-11;
Previous Sale: \$575,000, 08-06-02
80 Orchard Road, \$1,140,000, 2 Bdrms, 1963 SqFt, 1946 YrBl, 3-16-11
182 Ravenhill Road, \$895,000, 3 Bdrms, 2267 SqFt, 1982 YrBl, 3-15-11;
Previous Sale: \$560,000, 08-17-00
82 Underhill Road, \$480,000, 2 Bdrms, 1276 SqFt, 1961 YrBl, 3-10-11;
Previous Sale: \$262,500, 11-30-09

Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

LAFAYETTE

1840 Del Rio Drive, 94549, US Bank, 03-14-11, \$502,277, 1706 sf, 4 bd



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Top 4 Opportunities in 2011

- 1) Buy foreclosures in select neighborhoods and cities in Contra Costa County, for strong rental income returns, with future appreciation.
- 2) Buy a home in Lafayette, Moraga, or Orinda, in a rare buyer's market.
- 3) Sell in the under \$1,000,000 range in Lamorinda, where sales are now improving, and move up to your dream house in a higher price range where the best negotiating opportunities exist.
- 4) Downsize, and sell in Lamorinda, where the market has not dropped as much, then buy a great one-story home at a bargain price in a nice neighborhood where homes have dropped more. Keep a low property tax by transferring it to the new house within Contra Costa County.

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297 Corliss Drive, Moraga

Offered at \$1,065,000



Spacious traditional home has all the right spaces and plenty of extra space too!

**** 5 Bedrooms / 3 Baths / 3229 Sq.Ft. / .36 Acres ****

The main house has 4 bedrooms, including an expanded master suite. There is a gracious entry leading to formal living and dining rooms, and a remodeled kitchen featuring newer cabinetry, double ovens, and a sunny breakfast nook.

The huge bonus room is connected through the laundry hall, and has it's own exterior entrance and furnace. It has a large main room, a bedroom and an office - this space would be perfect for a home business, in-laws, an au-pair, theatre room, party room, man-cave, teen hang-out.....

The flat, private .36 acre lot has a gorgeous pool plus lawn and patio.

- More pictures & details available at www.TheOlsenTeam.com -

Featured Sold and Pending Listings - 2011



116 Corliss
Sold Before Market!



1412 Camino Pereal
Empty Nest Sellers



132 Greenbriar
Great Views!



39 Sea Pines
Cul-de-Sac + Views!



1047 Larch Ave.
Sold Before Market!



2 Wingfoot
SALE PENDING



182 Ravenhill
Gorgeous Remodel



787 Augusta Drive
Exceptional Lot!



4 Sparrow Court
SALE PENDING

Buyer Representation—2011



452 Millfield Place
Charming Cul-de-Sac



2570 Walnut Blvd
Short-sale Success



1588 Del Monte Court
Huge Lot!



469 Fernwood Drive
SALE PENDING



18 Lavenida
SALE PENDING



120 Miramonte
SALE PENDING

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You Can Recycle That?

By Sophie Braccini



Clear plastic, tubs and boxes; Sandy Jones knows what plastics to recycle

Photo Rod Jones

When Sandy Jones of Orinda first heard about the Recycle Bank it seemed the perfect opportunity to augment her recycling habit. But she had questions; she already recycled quite a bit and was not clear on what else she could do. She contacted the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority (CCCSWA) and got an education. “There were many things I could have recycled that I didn’t know about,” she says, “such as cottage cheese containers and aluminum foil. Now I feel that I do the best I can. We are so lucky to live in this country that it’s nice to be able to help to preserve it,” says Jones.

How can we tell which plastic containers can be recycled? The number on the bottom of the container indicates what it’s made of and how it can be recycled, according to Bart Carr, Senior Project Manager with CCSWA. “Every container with numbers 1-7, except 6, can be recycled,” says Carr.

Number 6 containers are the Styrofoam packaging that’s light, cheap and can be easily molded. Plastic tableware, meat trays, some egg cartons, and shipping blocks are made of this polystyrene and cannot be recycled. But many other plastics can (the below is not an all-inclusive list, just a sampling):

- #1 – these containers include water and cooking oil bottles, and peanut butter jars;
- #2 – such things as detergent bottles, milk jugs, and yogurt cups;
- #3 – shrink-wrap and certain outdoor furniture;
- #4 – dry cleaning bags, trash can liners, food storage containers;
- #5 – ketchup bottles, drinking straws, aerosol caps;
- #7 – includes Tupperware and bio-plastics.

“How about paper cups, paper take-out food containers, or big soiled pizza delivery boxes made of cardboard?” asked Jones. “The question about paper cups is com-

plex,” answered Carr, “if it is coated with a plastic film you cannot recycle it, but if it is waxed, you can.” Figuring out the difference is not easy. Carr recommends scratching the surface with a nail; if what comes out is wax-like, recycle it, if not, abstain. “As far as paper goods that have held food, those can go into the yard waste container (the green one),” adds Carr; our collection district recycles food waste.

As of today, about 20% of all Moraga and Orinda residents are registered with Recycle Bank, a program that gets you points for recycling that can be converted into goods for yourself or funding for local schools.



#5 at the bottom of a yogurt container.

Photo Sophie Braccini

To register with Recycle Bank:

If you’ve lost the letter that contained your PIN number, no problem – Go online to recyclebank.com and click on ‘register.’

Enter your information, including your address.

Get a new pin by mail or immediately with a message sent to your cell phone; now you can complete your registration.

Recycling in Lamorinda

The numbers below are provided by the Central Costa County Solid Waste Authority (CCCSWA) and will be included in the Lamorinda Weekly on an ongoing basis when available.

January 2011	Tons Recycled		Tons Landfill		% Recycled
Lafayette	717		435		62
Moraga	445		243		64
Orinda	601		362		62

The Real Estate Quarter in Review

By Conrad Bassett, CRP, GMS

The first quarter of 2011 showed mixed activity on the residential side of Lamorinda real estate with supply down, pending sales down, closings up and the average sales price down versus the same period a year ago.

Per Contra Costa Association of Realtors statistics reported from January 1 through March 31, 2011, 36 single-family homes closed in Lafayette which was the same as one year ago and in 2009. Sales prices ranged from \$399,000 to \$2,500,000 and the average number of days on market was 70 days. It was 65 days a year ago. The average sales price was \$973,341, which was down significantly from 2010's first quarter average of \$1,065,859.

In Moraga the number of single-family closings was 22 which was a significant increase from the 14 that closed in the first quarter of 2010. Prices ranged from \$615,000 to \$1,175,000. The average sale price was \$823,931 versus a year ago when the average was \$894,892. The average marketing time was 85 days – much higher than the 46 days for the first quarter of 2010.

In Orinda the number of single-family closings was up to 35 from 23 a year ago. Sales prices ranged from \$250,000 to \$1,580,000 with an average price of \$894,857. It took an average of 58 days on the market to sell a home versus a year ago when the 23 sales averaged \$1,009,260 after 68 days on the market.

So far this year, on an average price per square foot basis, Lafayette detached single-family homes sold at \$384 per square foot, Moraga homes sold for \$374 and Orinda was at \$366. In the year ago quarter these amounts were \$432, \$372, and \$417 respectively.

In the condominium/town home category, Lafayette had one closing at \$555,100; Moraga had 15 ranging from \$121,800 to \$639,900 and Orinda had three—a low of \$560,000 and a high of \$895,000. They were all in Orinda Woods.

As of April 5, 2011, there were 92 homes under contract per the MLS in the three communities combined with asking prices of \$99,900 to \$5,800,000. It should be pointed out that there are 19 "Potential Short Sales" that are currently pending and were subject to lender approval. The time for short sales to be approved has shortened in some cases, but the waiting time often re-

mains several months. Eight of the pending sales are REOs (bank owned properties.)

Inventory, however, has decreased to the current supply of 180 homes from 215 at this same time in 2010.

There are "only" 80 properties on the market in Lafayette versus 114 properties on the market at this time a year ago. In 2009 there were 84 in April. Asking prices in Lafayette currently range from \$350,000 to \$10,750,000. Of these, ten are distressed sales—attempted short sales or REOs. In Moraga, buyers have their choice of 45 homes or condominiums listed between \$199,500 and \$1,995,000. A year ago at this time there were 50. A telling sign of what other communities have experienced is that 11 of the currently available properties are short sales or REOs. This is the highest percentage in some time.

In Orinda there are 55 on the market down from 75 a year ago. The list prices range from \$249,900 to \$4,250,000. Two are short sales and six are bank-owned properties.

As is the case nearly every quarter, the most active price range is in the more "affordable" price ranges. At the high end, only one home sold above \$2,000,000 in the three communities combined. It was in Lafayette. A year ago there were four sales in the \$2 million plus range in the first quarter—all in Lafayette. There are 21 currently available above this amount—all in Lafayette or Orinda.

Interest rates continue to be attractive and many corporations continue to relocate families both in to and out of the area. However, this third piece of the real estate market—the corporate owned property segment—is appearing more often.

Corporations often buy homes from their transferring employees if the employee cannot sell the home prior to a corporate "buy out." As the properties are vacant and cost significant sums of money to hold for mortgage payments, taxes, maintenance, utilities and other factors, often the larger corporations would rather sell them at lower prices quickly, rather than holding them for extended periods of time. The relocation management companies do not give away the properties, but their competitive prices often can affect the rest of the market, much like REOs.

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2011 Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour

... continued from page F1



Betty Nelson's garden

Photo provided

"We also cut the use of pesticides," said Raymond, who spends a few hours every week in her garden tending to things and trying to pull weeds before they go to seed.

Raymond and Nelson have their favorite places to get their native plants. "Some local nurseries refuse to carry native plants because they think that residents do not want them," says Raymond, "Orchard and Moraga Gardens carry some." She goes to Tilden Park and the Botanical Garden to get plants. "Garden Natives Nursery in Martinez has plants that are hard to find, like an unusual cultivar of California fuchsia called Calistoga," says Nelson, "there is also Native Here Nursery in Tilden Park that grows local native plants, from local seeds they collect around here; if you want a valley oak from Lafayette, you can get it there."

This year's tour will again feature Barbara Leitner's garden in Orinda, and Al and Barbara Kyte's Moraga garden. Leitner is a botanist and native plant fan, who uses plants local to the San Pablo Creek watershed. The Kyte's garden, 35 years in development, contains over 100 species of California natives, manzanita-based chaparral in front and a Japanese garden concept in the back with a stream and fish pond.

Another garden new to the Tour is Mary Jennings and Michael Jennings' garden in Lafayette, which was developed by Michael who studied horticulture at Diablo Valley College under the legendary Stewart Winchester.

The Tour is volunteer-run and registration must be complete by April 24. For more information go to www.bringingbackthenatives.net.

Earthquake Preparedness: Even a Little Can Help a Lot

Submitted by Julie Lindemann, Moraga Neighborhood Emergency Preparedness Steering Committee

While the tragedy in Japan is still fresh in our minds, all Lamorinda residents are encouraged to review their level of earthquake preparedness. After a large earthquake local supplies of food and water can be quickly depleted. Since roads and bridges are likely to be damaged or blocked, aid may not be able to reach you for 3-7 days or even longer, particularly if you live away from the town center or are in a remote area such as Moraga or Canyon. The good news is that by putting away some modest stores of extra water and food, as well as a few other emergency supplies, you can make a big difference for your family. By preparing now you can reduce your risks of deprivation after a quake.

This is a good time to check on your stored food and water supplies – you should have enough for at least 7 days. Experts recommend that you store 1 gallon of water per person per day which equates to 28 gallons for a family of four to survive one week. Check your stored emergency food as well. This is a good time to rotate out the old and purchase new, so your supplies stay fresh and palatable. Canned food is the logical choice for emergency supplies so remember to have an extra can opener nearby. Don't forget that your pets will need food and water for that same length of time!

Every family should have a first aid kit. Some of the contents may have expiration dates and need rotating just like your food stores. Also check that your

emergency communication plan is up to date – have any family members moved or changed their telephone numbers in the past year? April is a good month to check emergency radio and flashlight batteries. Also check, shake and test fire extinguishers and if necessary, have them recharged or replace them. Finally, since earthquakes can cause gas line leaks that trigger fires, you should know where your gas meter is, how to determine whether you have a gas leak, and how to turn off your gas at the meter if necessary.

Each family should be as prepared as possible for the Big One. However, it is much easier to get and stay motivated if families join with others in their neighborhood to discuss these issues. Neighbors working together make this all more fun too. Emergency preparedness checklists are available on-line at www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/earthquake/info_homeowners.shtm. Check with your local chapter of CERT to find out what emergency training resources are available in your local area. In Moraga there is a dedicated group of CERT trained volunteers that help neighborhood groups in the town get organized. They'll even come to your house and give free presentations and provide other resource materials. Moraga residents can contact them at MoragaNEP@gmail.com.

It only takes a few hours to make a big difference in your level of preparedness. Don't delay!

Thank you for recycling this paper. It is printed on at least 50% recycled material and should be recycled again.



Mother's Day Contest

Tell us in 50 words or less why your mom is the "Best Mom in Lamorinda."

If your entry is selected as the most sincere and original, your mom will receive the grand prize:

One-half day cleaning provided by **Total Clean**.

ENTRY FORM

My name is , _____

and I think my Mom is "*the best Mom in Lamorinda*" because

Name of Mom _____

Phone Number _____

Address _____

Entries must be received by Monday May 2, 2011.

Winning letter will be published in the Lamorinda Weekly's in our May 11 issue.

Contest judged by our editorial team.

Download additional entry forms at www.lamorindaweekly.com/contest

Send completed entry form to the Lamorinda Weekly
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29 La Vuelta
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Offered at \$1,345,000



20 Snow Court
Lg 5bd/3.5ba home in quiet, serene Lost Valley. Over 4200 sf, 2 fam rms, lvl play area, fenced veggie garden w/raised beds. Valley & Mt. Diablo views. Near schools, shopping & commute.
Offered at \$1,395,000



239 Sundown Terrace
Orinda Downs jewel! Cust trad 5bd/3ba, 3468 sf on prem cul-de-sac lot. Lux mstr w/frplc, hickory hdwd flrs, Chef's kitchen, dining/fam combo w/frplc, patio & play areas.
Offered at \$1,895,000



136 Manzanita Court
Spectacular newly bilt 4000 sf custom Santa Barbara style home seldom found in area. 4bd/3.5ba of incredible design & custom appointments. A world of charm.
Offered at \$1,995,000



2092-2094 Donald Drive
Charming ranch-style duplex each w/2bd/1ba & 1-car garage. All dual panes, hdwd in LR, DR & kitchen, pvt backyard in wooded setting. Top schools.
Offered at \$629,000



7 Gloria Court
Updated 4bd/3ba on cul de sac with hdwd floors, Andersen sliders and an ideal in-law or teen set-up. Level private yard...move in ready.
Offered at \$899,000



1843 St. Andrews Drive
3424 sf hm in MCC w/pvt patio, decks & vues. New stainless applis, cathedral ceiling, dual panes, 3 fireplaces. Many upgrades by orig owners. All MCC benefits, top schools.
Offered at \$955,000



927 Augusta Drive
Located at the end of a cul de sac this professionally decorated 4+bd/2.5ba home is most desirable. Privacy, views and an open space feeling make this a choice spot in MCC!
Offered at \$1,020,000



297 Corliss Drive
Spacious former model home - 3200+ sf w/updated eat-in kitchen & expanded mstr bath. Hdwd flrs, lg bonus/in-law suite& much more. Lvl pretty yd w/lawn, pool & patio.
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61 Sanders Ranch Road
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1230 Quandt Road, Lafayette
Trad 3bd/1ba ranch with cottage charm. Room to expand! Seamless indoor/outdoor living, hdwd flrs, crown moldings, eat-in kitchen, walk to school & Springbrook Swim Club.
Offered at \$690,000



3308 Berta Lane
Sparkling 3+bd/3ba traditional home on storybook Lafayette coveted cul-de-sac! Walk to town! Photos: www.3308BertaLane.com.
Offered at \$995,000



1619 Reliez Valley Road
Great 5 bedroom/3 bath 3000+ family home on .9 acre with pool, privacy and AMAZING VIEWS! Original owners, extremely well maintained.
Offered at \$1,249,000



4090 Coralee Lane
Great 5bd/4ba in fabulous low maint landscaped setting. Walls of glass clerestory windows, hi ceilings. Extra space for studio or office. Peaceful and easy freeway access.
Offered at \$1,250,000



3724 St. Francis Drive
Happy Valley Rose Lane neighborhood! Beaut sgl lvl 4bd home, gourmet kit/lg fam rm opens to beaut landscaped yd. Fab vineyard, waterfall & pond, garden, views of hills, 5-car garage.
Offered at \$1,599,000

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(925) 254-0505 or 1-866-856-VARE

