

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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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