

# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 06 Issue 8 Wednesday, June 20, 2012

## Bees Doing Their Business in the Back Yard

By Cathy Tyson

What backyard gardener doesn't like a good buzz? From bees, of course. Now even neophyte horticulturalists can enjoy the benefits of bees without having to actively manage a hive – and reap a bounty of honey in return for the “rent.” Enter Mike Vigo, Orinda resident, former securities broker, trader and principal at 033 Asset Management, Robertson Stephens and Montgomery Securities. The full time “Bee Rancher” has brought his business acumen and very unique hive concept to backyards throughout Lamorinda.

It all started with a 4H project that his three girls were involved in four years ago; the family learned what it takes to manage healthy, happy bees from the ground up. Friendly, personable Vigo was ready for a change at work and saw the bee business as a golden opportunity, noting key similarities in both service oriented businesses: “It’s all about maintaining and fostering relationships.” Armed with an Agriculture Business Management degree from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, a beekeeping software program, diligently updated spreadsheets and electronic notes on each and every hive, he’s applying lessons learned in the securities business to managing The Bee Ranchers.

Word of the local enterprise has spread from friends and family and beyond. He now manages over 50 hives – one has landed in the backyard of Wendy and Andy Scheck, organic gardeners and the publishers of this newspaper. Like proud new parents, they were up early on the morning after their initial bee installation checking on the new arrivals.

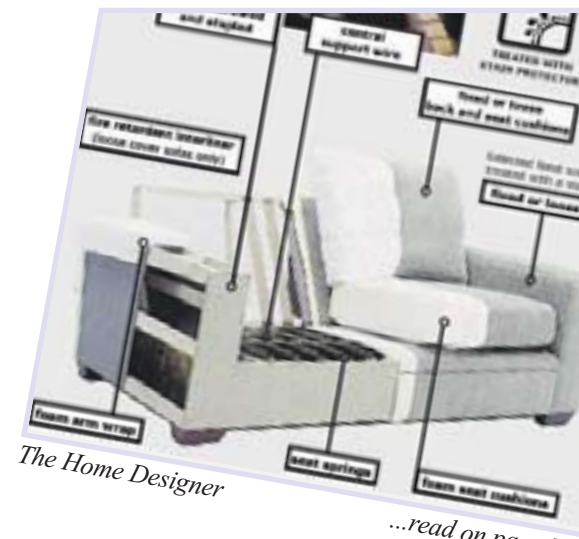
Delivery and set up of the Scheck’s lovely cedar



Mike Vigo delivers Bees at night

Photos Andy Scheck

hive took place in the evening; Vigo was well prepared with a headlamp to navigate through the backyard carrying the components of the hive. No drama, no gloves – the install went off without a peep from the occupants.



...read on page D6

“Day one is always special,” said Vigo describing the orientation flight of the hive foragers. “They have GPS (global positioning system)” – or as fellow staff writer Cathy Dausman points out – “Bee PS.”

... continued on page D4

# Finola Fellner

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## 4320 El Nido Ranch Rd., Orinda



**Lovely Home with Private Setting!**  
Fabulous approx 2600 sq. ft. 4bd/2ba one level home on 1.17 acre with the perfect floor plan. Wonderful vaulted ceilings, formal living & dining rooms with kitchen and family room access. Large level yard with plenty of room for your dreams!

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## 30 Fairmayden Lane, Danville



Represented buyer **Offered at \$1,110,000**

## 521 Tahos Road, Orinda



Represented buyers in multiple offers  
**Offered at \$1,295,000**

## 30 Sanford Lane, Lafayette



Represented buyer **Offered at \$2,395,000**

## 2 La Vuelta, Orinda



**Orinda Country Club Beauty!**  
Gorgeous 3964 sq. ft. updated home with 4 bd/3ba++ office, formal living and dining rooms, family room, chef's kitchen, mudroom, with custom high end finishes throughout. Beautiful pool and gardens with meandering paths and large deck area for entertaining.

**Offered at 1,695,000**

## Stanton Court Orinda



Represented seller sold before it hit the market

## 247 Scofield Drive, Moraga



Represented buyer **Offered at \$795,000**

## 11 Aspinwall Court, Orinda



Represented seller **Offered at \$805,000**



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## Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	19	\$375,000	\$1,615,000
MORAGA	5	\$435,000	\$1,650,000
ORINDA	5	\$495,000	\$1,300,000

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

- 881 Avalon Court, \$1,325,000, 3 Bdrms, 2085 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 5-10-12;  
Previous Sale: \$1,255,000, 12-24-09
- 5 Black Forest Court, \$1,150,000, 3 Bdrms, 2931 SqFt, 1980 YrBlt, 5-15-12;  
Previous Sale: \$557,000, 09-30-97
- 3423 Black Hawk Road, \$1,600,000, 4 Bdrms, 2688 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 5-18-12;  
Previous Sale: \$575,000, 08-24-95
- 375 Castello Road, \$650,000, 3 Bdrms, 1554 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 5-15-12
- 422 Castello Road, \$655,000, 3 Bdrms, 1505 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 5-16-12
- 3195 Condit Road, \$404,000, 4 Bdrms, 3277 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 5-18-12;  
Previous Sale: \$845,000, 08-06-04
- 917 Hough Avenue #10, \$375,000, 2 Bdrms, 1038 SqFt, 1969 YrBlt, 5-21-12
- 105 James Place, \$1,365,000, 3 Bdrms, 1981 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 5-22-12;  
Previous Sale: \$1,295,000, 09-01-10
- 3208 Judith Lane, \$725,000, 3 Bdrms, 1439 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 5-22-12;  
Previous Sale: \$830,000, 12-12-06
- 3951 Los Arabis Drive, \$1,615,000, 4 Bdrms, 2833 SqFt, 2007 YrBlt, 5-10-12;  
Previous Sale: \$1,875,000, 07-17-08
- 639 Los Palos Drive, \$1,350,000, 5 Bdrms, 2185 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 5-15-12;  
Previous Sale: \$1,325,000, 09-15-05
- 3787 Mosswood Drive, \$502,000, 2 Bdrms, 1376 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 5-15-12;  
Previous Sale: \$700,000, 02-16-06
- 19 Richelle Court, \$1,025,000, 4 Bdrms, 2657 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 5-14-12;  
Previous Sale: \$449,000, 11-29-94
- 3320 South Lucille Lane, \$625,000, 3 Bdrms, 1651 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 5-16-12;  
Previous Sale: \$529,000, 09-06-02
- 964 Stow Lane, \$841,000, 4 Bdrms, 2255 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 5-11-12
- 1402 Sunset Loop, \$510,000, 3 Bdrms, 1023 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 5-22-12;  
Previous Sale: \$724,000, 07-03-06
- 3270 Sweet Drive, \$640,000, 3 Bdrms, 1150 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 5-16-12;  
Previous Sale: \$285,000, 06-30-94
- 3574 Terrace Way #1, \$792,500, 3800 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 5-17-12
- 5 Westminster Place, \$886,000, 5 Bdrms, 2845 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 5-21-12;  
Previous Sale: \$775,000, 06-18-01

### MORAGA

- 247 Claudia Court, \$1,160,000, 4 Bdrms, 2940 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 5-21-12;  
Previous Sale: \$220,000, 06-01-78
- 264 Lakefield Place, \$695,000, 4 Bdrms, 2106 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 5-17-12
- 45 Merrill Circle #N, \$1,650,000, 4 Bdrms, 4542 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 5-11-12
- 68 Miramonte Drive, \$435,000, 2 Bdrms, 1436 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 5-11-12
- 461 Woodminster Drive, \$435,000, 2 Bdrms, 1474 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 5-11-12;  
Previous Sale: \$55,000, 06-05-75

### ORINDA

- 5 Aqua Vista, \$1,300,000, 4 Bdrms, 3043 SqFt, 1972 YrBlt, 5-18-12;  
Previous Sale: \$665,000, 01-30-98
- 20 Birch Court, \$495,000, 1 Bdrms, 830 SqFt, 1925 YrBlt, 5-11-12;  
Previous Sale: \$445,000, 04-13-05
- 5 Charles Hill Place, \$1,280,000, 3 Bdrms, 2145 SqFt, 1915 YrBlt, 5-14-12;  
Previous Sale: \$1,050,000, 09-14-11
- 255 La Espiral, \$920,000, 4 Bdrms, 2563 SqFt, 1937 YrBlt, 5-17-12;  
Previous Sale: \$1,150,000, 06-15-05
- 17 Lombardy Lane, \$1,035,000, 4 Bdrms, 1977 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 5-11-12;  
Previous Sale: \$589,000, 10-30-96

## Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

none



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**ORINDA** ~ Immaculate view home! This cozy split-level residence includes 3 bdrms, 2 baths, step-down living room w/vaulted ceiling, large formal dining, eat-in kitchen, & master suite w/walk-in closet. Every room is bathed in natural light, and ALL bdrms & living areas have terrific views! Approx. 2,034 sq ft and impeccably maintained. Very quiet location at the top of a hill with gorgeous front entry. Approx. 8 minutes to BART, downtown Orinda, and Highway 24. Well-priced at **\$899,900**



**Broker Paul Moreton**  
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**LAFAYETTE** ~ This home featured in Sunset Magazine. Secluded hilltop property with 360 panoramic views offering unmatched vistas & sunsets. Flagstone rimmed, stunning "vanishing-edge" pool seemingly cantilevered beyond the canyon rim. Energy efficient w/solar panels, poolside covered BBQ area w/full bath. A Must See Custom Home! **\$2,650,000**



**Bruce Maxon** ~ 925.200.0179 ~ [ibruce@comcast.net](mailto:ibruce@comcast.net)



**ORINDA** ~ Timeless 4+ Bedroom, 3 Bath Orinda Country Club home with a 2 car garage, relaxing swimming pool, and a classic Living Room with a brick fireplace. Just a short walk to Lake Cascade! This is a fabulous find for **\$750,000**



**WHITE GATE** ~ Custom remodeled single story on cul-de-sac backing to open space. This 4 bdrm, 4 bath home has over 3500 sq ft. + 3 car gar. Large gourmet kitchen with huge center island plus separate eating area. Master suite includes his and her walk-in closets lg master bath w/steam shower & therapeutic whirlpool tub. Wonderful backyard w/large pool & spa recently refinished. Lighted gazebo for relaxing. Virtual tour @ [gretchenbryce.com](http://gretchenbryce.com) **Listed at \$1,448,000**



**Gretchen Bryce** ~ 925.683.2477 ~ [gretchenbryce@msn.com](mailto:gretchenbryce@msn.com)



**WALNUT CREEK** ~ One of a kind magnificent home conveniently located to 24/680 and downtown Walnut Creek. This 5300+ sq ft home has 5 bdrms, 5 baths with a separate office or 6th bdrm. VIEWS from almost every rm. Gourmet kitchen, hrdwd flrs, 3 car gar., & more. Private deck with built in spa, vineyard, a must see! **\$2,350,000**

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# Bees Doing Their Business in the Back Yard

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First checkup after two weeks. Mike Vigo points to bee wax on the inside of the hive cover.

The bees need to get the lay of the land – eventually cruising up to three miles away to forage before coming home at dusk.

Scheck was up early enough to see the first bee come out at 6:50 a.m. May 9, noting that a brave explorer and friend landed on the ground and stopped moving. “I wasn’t sure if they died or if it was still too cold for them to make it back,” he said. By 10 a.m., he reported some had made it to the lemon tree and other nearby flowers. “By eleven, lots of activity all around and many had found the lemon tree.” In the ensuing days, there were more and more flights as the residents got settled into their new home.

So far, so good, just over a month into their tenure at the Scheck’s house, the Bee Rancher has been back periodically to check on the hive and make sure the queen is laying eggs, to watch out for pesky mites and to verify the bee’s progress – apparently they don’t like being too constrained. Their garden is thriving,

flowers and trees are buzzing with bee activity, and it looks like only one sting to their sweet, inquisitive Golden Retriever. The dog’s not explaining if she tried to eat one of the new honeybee guests, or if it was a cranky yellow jacket.

Picking the right location is good for houses, and good for hives. Morning light is preferable for the hive – to gradually warm the hive with entry and exit toward the back – so the bees don’t get spooked when they sense a person coming to check up on them. With a mini-front porch that seems to serve as a landing strip, the 8,000 bees manage getting in and out just fine, going about their business pollinating.

With sophisticated gardeners, prime habitat, an abundance of fruit trees and tons of interest in colony collapse, Lamorinda residents have embraced the hive management concept. The Bee Rancher did his homework and offers two services: Hive hosting for those who want to help out the honeybee – where the Bee Rancher owns the hives, the

bees and honey, and then sells the proceeds through his wife, Jennifer Vigo’s shop ReChic Boutique 101 in Orinda. Homeowners get up to two pounds of honey per extraction – usually twice per year, and their own personal backyard pollinators. For the 2012 season, all of the hive-hosting colonies have been placed, but Vigo can keep interested parties on a list for next year.

The second option is “a lot like a pool guy,” says Vigo. The homeowner owns the hive, the honey and the bees and he just comes to service it and manage the harvest. A third component of the business is his custom metal hive stands. “I collect used bedframes, and re-purpose them to keep the hives from eight to twelve inches off the ground,” he said. Results have been good so far. Now on version 2.0, the stands have extra long legs because of the uneven terrain of the area.

Over the summer Vigo’s ranch hands, his girls – the oldest is now 16 – will help tend to the herd of 50-plus hives and will pitch in for the honey harvest, of course when they’re not busy with sports and friends. Vigo will be out on the range visiting hives – roughly twice per month from March through October. For more information, visit [www.thebeeranchers.com](http://www.thebeeranchers.com).



Checking for eggs, larva and mites on a frame





Bee at work on a lavender flower

## Attack of the Vampire Mite?

Varroa Destructor external parasitic mites attack honey bees and can replicate in a honey bee colony and suck the "blood" or hemolymph of adult honey bees and leave open wounds which are prone to infection. Adult bees are almost completely defenseless against these parasites. This reddish brown teeny pest is only 1 – 1.8 millimeters long, and 1.5 – 2 millimeters wide; but the eight legged mini-beast can wreak havoc in a hive, since they reproduce on a 10 day cycle.

## Why are bees disappearing?

"Beginning in 2006, beekeepers in the United States began to report unexplained losses of hives — 30 percent and upward — leading to a phenomenon called colony collapse disorder (CCD). The cause of CCD remains under debate, but scientific consensus is beginning to emerge suggesting that there is no one cause but rather a combination of factors including lack of foraging plants, infections, breeding, and pesticides—with none catastrophic on their own, but having a synergistic effect when occurring in combination," writes Wikipedia with sources noted as New Scientist, Environmental Microbiology and BBC News.

One possible component of CCD is clothianidin, developed by Takeda Chemical Industries and by Bayer AG. This particular insecticide is chemically similar to nicotine, which has been used as a pesticide since the late 1700s. The Environmental Protection Agency describes clothianidin's major risk to non-target insects – honeybees. Studies suggest the potential for long term toxic risk to honeybees and other beneficial insects according to the Congressional Research Service Report for Congress on Honey Bee Colony Collapse Disorder.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority notes that clothianidin ranks "among the most highly acutely toxic insecticides to bees" through contact and oral exposure.



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## 3 THINGS YOUR ARBORIST WANTS YOU TO KNOW

- 1-If you see mushrooms or fungi growing on your tree or if a big limb breaks off during a storm have Advance Tree Service out for a tree inspection before it's too late. Those can be signs of bigger problems.
- 2-Be wary of people who knock on your door or leave cards on your driveway, that could mean they are NOT Licensed California State Contractors and have NO liability insurance. Always get proof from the insurance co. because anyone can make a fake document on a computer.
- 3-Having proper technique is essential. Each cut has the potential to change the growth of the tree. Poor pruning can cause damage that last the life of the tree. So make sure you have an ISA Certified Arborist take good care of your tree needs.

So don't wait until it's too late, have a complete inspection by your local ISA Certified Arborist at Advance Tree Service and Landscaping.

Advance Tree Service  
Your Authority on Trees and Landscape.



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## The Home Designer

# Designed To Last – Furniture Buying 101

By Brandon Neff



Custom furniture designed by Brandon Neff.

Photo courtesy of Brandon Neff Design

Yes, Virginia, there is a better sofa – or chair for that matter. When shopping for upholstered furniture you truly get what you pay for. And, in this era of eco-friendly, sustainable and value-conscience purchasing nothing fits that model more than well-built home furnishings. It seems nothing is made to last these days.

My family has had furniture pieces handed down over generations that still look and work beautifully today. I seriously doubt you'd be able to

hand down half of the stuff I see being offered up from those self-help big box stores, and that sad furniture you purchase next to the oversized detergents and tube socks. Well, maybe you could hand down what's left of them. Truly, something that endures and performs well, year after year, is the definition of value. So, before you click "add to cart," on that economy furniture website you're surfing, step away from the computer and take a few notes – knowing what you're buying, and why, will make your decision a lot easier.

right cost you more? Of course. However, will that piece last longer, maintain its integrity and support over time, and cost you less long-term? Absolutely. Furthermore, It's even more important to furnish high traffic rooms, like family rooms, with better quality furniture, so it will hold up to more wear and tear. In addition, a great frame can be re-upholstered, thereby extending the value of that piece.

Here's what I want you to do: take this column with you on your next shopping trip, and compare the following list to the choices you're considering. Don't be afraid to ask the salesperson to explain how their products are made, and where. If the answer you get is, "I don't know," or "I'll have to check and get back to you," I want you to step away from the showroom and go to your next destination. Now, read on, and digest the basics. Consider this a "CARFAX" for home furnishings.

**Eight-way, hand-tied springs.** Each coil spring is placed in the seat by hand and tied into place with twine using a series of interlocking knots. Steel coil springs are set within the furniture frame and tied together in eight directions. Each piece of furniture has a unique spring pattern and height to provide just the right degree of comfort.

**Kiln dried hardwood.** Kiln dried frames are superior because you can be sure about the reduction of the moisture content to a satisfactory level. This drastic reduction in wood's moisture content is important so that the wood doesn't warp or shrink with changes in humidity and temperature.

... continued on next page



**Double-dowel joints.** Double-doweled joints provide extra strength and durability. All corners should be reinforced using corner blocks secured by both glue and screws. Additionally, look for mortise and tenon joinery as an option to double-dowels. These supply superior strength to the frame.

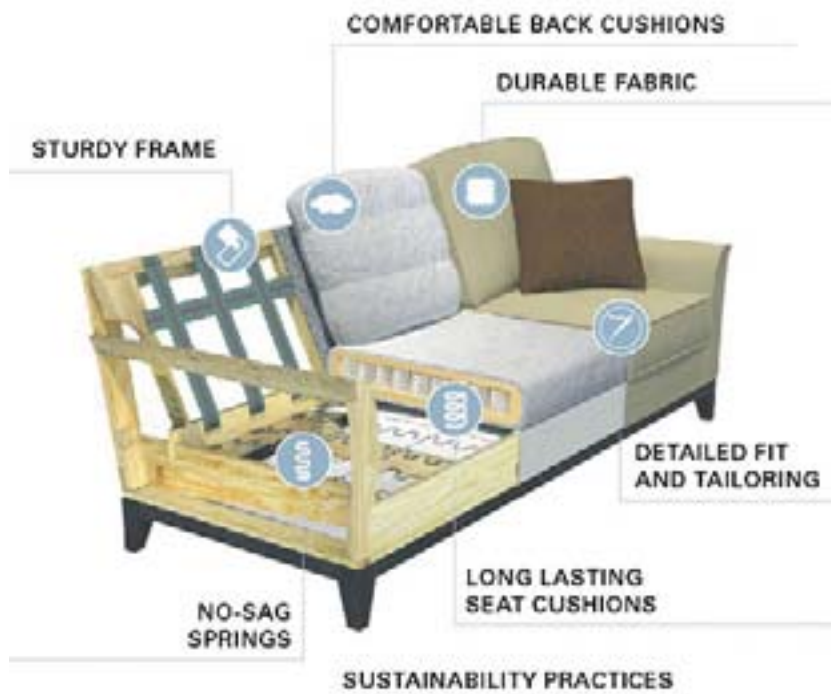
**Sinuuous springs.** These are heavy-gauge steel springs that have been heat-formed into continuous "S" shapes. They are cut into lengths and affixed to the frame. Look for these primarily for support to the back. Conversely, drop-in springs are mass-manufactured, welded units that are more cheaply manufactured and considered to be of lower quality than sinuous springs.

I always encourage my clients to buy the very best they can. Building a furniture collection can take time, and you want to do it purposefully and with an eye toward quality. Remember, your home is your sanctuary – furnish it wisely.

*Brandon Neff is a Bay Area based Interior Designer. He can be reached at [BrandonNeffDesign.com](http://BrandonNeffDesign.com) or at [brandonneffdesign@yahoo.com](mailto:brandonneffdesign@yahoo.com).*



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## 89 El Gavilan, Orinda Open Sunday, June 24th, 2-5



Imagine yourself sitting quietly on the patio, enjoying your morning coffee or evening cocktail, viewing the trees and distant hills, hearing the birds and relaxing. Wouldn't you love to do that every day?

This absolute gem of a home affords you that opportunity and more.

Lovingly updated and maintained by the owners for 18 years, this home is enhanced with quality handcrafted features that convey ambience of a bygone era when custom craftsmanship was a noticeable amenity. The setting is tranquil, serene & private with outstanding views of the surrounding hills and Mount Diablo.

89 El Gavilan offers extensive use of vertical grain fir in wainscoting, trim and some doors. There are walls of glass, beautiful hardwood floors, vaulted ceilings, storage cabinets artfully built into the walls, easy access to the outdoors, and the home is open, airy and filled with light.

All of these wonderful natural and artistic features are within minutes of town, BART, Highway 24 and Orinda's outstanding public schools.

**Wouldn't you love to enjoy all this home offers? Call me for more information or to schedule your showing.**

**Offered at \$685,000**

*It's April in Lamorinda For Real Estate*



**April Matthews**

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**ORINDA**   
**89 El Gavilan Road**  
 OCC romantic/updated hideaway. Hdwd flrs, walls of glass. Very special 3bd/2ba w/Great Rm/kitchen combo, sep fam rm/study. End of cul de sac nr shops/Bart/24. Lg, pvt park-like yd.  
**Offered at \$685,000**



**ORINDA**   
**50 Las Cascadas**  
 Rustic 80 year old 2bd/1.5ba retreat nestled on gorgeous wooded one+ acre. End of cul de sac in prime Country Club location. Contractor special.  
**Offered at \$749,000**



**ORINDA**   
**84 Tara Road**  
 Never before on mkt! Classic 4bd ranch home w/gracious LR, elegant formal dining, spacious fam rm. Fab 1/2 acre w/huge level yd & lovely views. Walk to Glorietta Elementary.  
**Offered at \$829,000**




**ORINDA**   
**9 Lavenida**  
 Curb appeal! Classic 3+bd/2.5ba rancher on premium corner lot. Granite counter kit w/ss appls. Fam rm off kitchen. Ideal floorplan, gardener's delight. One blk to elem & high school.  
**Offered at \$949,000**



**ORINDA**   
**13 Crestview Court**  
 Be ready for summer in this fabulous custom 4bd/3ba 3012 sf contemp w/great open flr plan, hdwd flrs, dual panes, A/C, Great Room, pano vus & pool on 1.25 acre lot.  
**Offered at \$1,249,000**




**ORINDA**   
**38 Mira Loma**  
 Ideal 5bd/4ba 4200 sf lg fam hm w/newly remod baths & kitchen w/adj fam rm. Fun game rm, kids floor & tons of space! EZ access outdoors to new decks & lush gardens, vus & privacy.  
**Offered at \$1,299,000**



**MORAGA**   
**544 Woodminster**  
 Enjoy a super location & access to top-rated schools w/this spacious, light-filled 2bd/1.5ba updated condo. Laminate hdwd flrs, crown molding. Open flrplan. Sunny patio, backs to open space.  
**Offered at \$499,000**



**MORAGA**   
**312 Corte Gabriel**  
 Prime location w/pvt patio backing to open space. Dramatic 3bd/2.5ba updated home + light & bright interior. Walk to town, trails, park...great location!  
**Offered at \$599,900**




**LAFAYETTE**   
**3216 Judith Lane**  
 Classic 3bd/2ba brick-trimmed ranch hm nr end of cul de sac. Spacious fam room. Beaut pvt knoll setting w/lvl yard + wonderful views. Walk to trail & town.  
**Offered at \$829,000**



**LAFAYETTE**   
**2 Tanglewood Lane**  
 Exquisite 4bd/2ba split lvl contemp w/breathtaking views. Entertainer's paradise on .39 tranquil ac. Hdwd flrs, high ceilings, sauna, commun tennis, nr downtown & Bart.  
**Offered at \$1,100,000**




**LAFAYETTE**   
**567 Merriewood Drive**  
 Totally remod 4bd/3ba 2600 sf hm on lg lot w/best Burton Valley loc. Steps to schools, parks, trails, swim clubs & more. Too many upgrades & high-end finishes to list. A must see!  
**Offered at \$1,139,000**




**LAFAYETTE**   
**755 Los Palos Drive**  
 Two homes on ONE fantastic lot in popular Trail neighborhood. Totally remodeled top-to-bottom. Virtual tour @ www.kurtpiper.com.  
**Offered at \$1,275,000**



**LAFAYETTE**   
**1063 Via Roble**  
 Dramatic updated 4bd/3ba contemp on .49 ac landscaped by award-winning Henry Matsutani. Hdwd flrs, 2 masters, fam rm, den. Gardener's paradise nr Bart & top schools.  
**Offered at \$1,295,000**




**LAFAYETTE**   
**3645 Boyer Circle**  
 Uniquely pvt 4bd/3.5ba 3600 sf custom hm on .76 ac natural setting close to town. Lovely views, lvl play area, fab decks, 3-car garage. Vaulted ceilings, hdwd flrs, French & sliding doors.  
**Offered at \$1,349,000**



**LAFAYETTE**   
**3388 Rossi Street**  
 Charming 4bd/3ba + 1bd/1ba in-law/guest. Updated kitchen & baths. Beautiful pool & lots of lvl lawns/gardens/entertaining areas. Small court, close-in, excellent schools.  
**Offered at \$1,395,000**



**LAFAYETTE**   
**3230 Greenhills**  
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