

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 06 Issue 11 Wednesday, August 1, 2012

Fix it or Fill it?

Pool Remodeling (or Removal) Can Go Swimmably

By Cathy Dausman

Pools, glorious pools! Perhaps nothing is more alluring to the California homeowner. After all, the Golden State has a long standing reputation for abundant sunshine. And what could be more leisurely than lounging poolside in your own backyard?

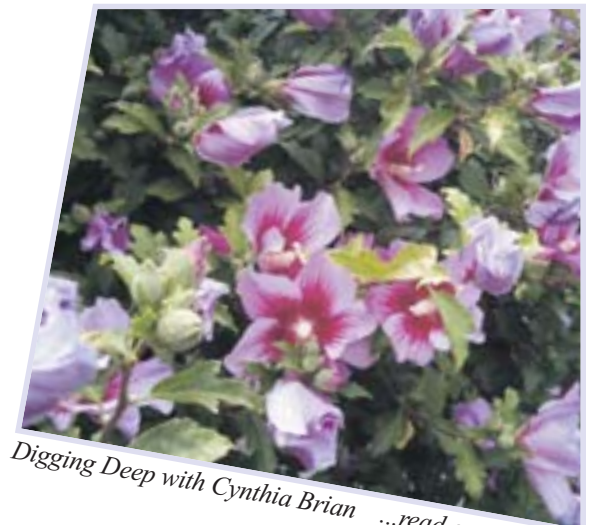
Recent records from the Contra Costa County Assessor's Office show 5,430 residential pools in Lamorinda. In Lafayette alone, approximately one out of every four homes has a pool. But when your Lamorinda pool shows a ring around its collar, or starts to leak from advanced age, it may be time to consider remodeling.

Whether homeowners, home buyers and home sellers perceive a pool as an asset or a liability often boils down to the classic realtor comment: location, location, location.

Diane Reilly of Alain Pinel Realtors estimates that approximately one third of her relocation clients look for the "California lifestyle" and have a pool for their kids on their house-hunting wish list. But "Northern California weather is not like Southern California weather," Reilly says, meaning Bay Area weather simply means less use. She says the need for a pool changes even within Lamorinda, where Orinda's hilly topography makes it more difficult to lay out a pool site than either Lafayette or Moraga.

A residential pool doesn't change its appraisal value, says Reilly, and unless the pool is poorly placed on the lot it won't greatly affect resale value. However, given the right home with the right pool, "I might have to arm wrestle you for it," she says with a laugh.

New owners of a home with a pool are quickly confronted with whether to



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian ...read on page D4



Current landscaping in the Thomas backyard shows little signs of the pool they removed when they bought their house.

The Thomas family removed their aging Moraga pool when they bought their house.

Photos courtesy the Thomas family

keep it or remove it, leave it "as is," or remodel it. Pool removal can be done quickly and easily with good access to the yard, says Ann Thomas of Moraga. "Filling in [removing] our pool was the first thing we did when we purchased our home four years ago."

Thomas and her husband grew up with backyard pools, but she says having pre-school aged children made it an easy decision to take theirs out, due to maintenance and liability issues.

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