

# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 06 Issue 18 Wednesday, November 7, 2012



*Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian*

## How Does Your Garden Grow?

By Cynthia Brian

*"As I farm the soil which yields my food, I share creation. Kings can do no more." Chinese proverb*



*Breakfast on the sunflower balcony*

*Photos Andy Scheck*

"Dirt - \$5.00!" the sign read in a corner shop in New York City. At age 19, this was my first trip to the mega metropolis paved in concrete and blacktop. Hard times had hit our farm in California because

of the drought combined with the low prices wineries were paying grape growers. I ran to the nearest pay phone to call home. "Daddy," I shouted in the receiver, "I found the solution to save our ranch. DIRT! Here in New York City, five-pound bags of

dirt sell for \$5. We have 368 acres of the brown stuff. I think we hit pay dirt!" My daddy chuckled. "There's dirt and then there's soil," he responded.

Potting soil, topsoil, peat, compost, mulch – all are different compositions of soil mixes that can be purchased in garden centers to increase the texture, aeration, and nutrient concentration of your own backyard dirt. The best soil is a loamy soil because it contains a balance of sand, silt, clay, and humus. Without good soil, you'll never have a great garden, no matter where you buy your plants or how much you spend. I like to compare soil to building a house. You can design the most beautiful structure, but if you have not built a strong, solid foundation, the building will not endure. Even with excellent construction, a house still needs regular upkeep including painting, cleaning, re-roofing, gutter cleaning, water-proofing, termite inspections, and more to preserve its integrity. Our precious dirt requires the identical maintenance.

After years of growing, the soil in our once lush gardens is depleted of nutrients. Crop rotating, mulching, composting, amendments, and soil replacement are necessary. Fall is a great time of year to determine what kind of soil you have. Fill a small jar with soil samples and leave it to settle overnight. The next day you will see distinct layers with sand staying on the bottom, silt in the middle, and clay will be on top. Once you see what percentage you have of which type (and in our area, most likely you'll have mostly clay), you'll be able to purchase the correct "dirt" to fix your garden.

... continued on page D4

# THE BEAUBELLE GROUP

Glenn and Kellie Beaubelle *present...*

## MORAGA ~ I Hastings Court Sanders Ranch ~ Open Sunday 2-4



This highly sought after traditional style home is located on a deep corner lot with inviting curb appeal. Gorgeous custom millwork, wainscoting, decorative molding, arch entries, hand-planked hardwood floors, plantation shutters, custom wall paint, coffered and boxed beam ceilings, Pella dual pane windows, and expansive rooms are but a few of the luxurious features of this approx. 4246 sq. ft., 4 bedroom, 3 bathroom home with bonus room and office. The tranquil outdoor setting features a .35-acre lot that includes a beautifully landscaped, multi-level outdoor entertaining space complete with outdoor kitchen, pool, spa, fire pit and view.

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## Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	18	\$560,000	\$2,023,000
MORAGA	9	\$625,000	\$2,173,500
ORINDA	7	\$680,000	\$1,600,000

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

- 995 Buchan Drive, \$800,000, 3 Bdrms, 1859 SqFt, 1955 YrBl, 9-28-12;  
Previous Sale: \$925,000, 04-06-05
- 3955 Canyon Road, \$1,175,000, 2 Bdrms, 2483 SqFt, 1963 YrBl, 10-2-12
- 3195 Condit Road, \$1,175,000, 4 Bdrms, 3277 SqFt, 1955 YrBl, 10-5-12;  
Previous Sale: \$404,000, 05-18-12
- 14 Diablo Oaks Way, \$1,460,000, 3 Bdrms, 3517 SqFt, 2001 YrBl, 9-28-12;  
Previous Sale: \$330,000, 11-01-02
- 3230 Greenhills Drive, \$1,575,000, 5 Bdrms, 4899 SqFt, 1987 YrBl, 10-3-12;  
Previous Sale: \$1,753,000, 08-16-07
- 4124 Happy Valley Road, \$2,023,000, 4 Bdrms, 4509 SqFt, 1978 YrBl, 9-27-12
- 3440 Lana Lane, \$725,000, 2 Bdrms, 987 SqFt, 1954 YrBl, 10-5-12;  
Previous Sale: \$452,500, 05-28-02
- 1225 Monticello Road, \$1,650,000, 5 Bdrms, 3987 SqFt, 1986 YrBl, 10-1-12;  
Previous Sale: \$1,250,000, 10-01-03
- 3769 Mosswood Drive, \$697,500, 3 Bdrms, 1706 SqFt, 1951 YrBl, 10-3-12
- 1068 North Thompson Road, \$560,000, 3 Bdrms, 1100 SqFt, 1963 YrBl, 10-3-12
- 3559 Old Mountain View Drive, \$1,250,000, 4 Bdrms, 4114 SqFt, 1991 YrBl, 10-3-12;  
Previous Sale: \$590,000, 09-06-91
- 3113 Ramada Court, \$659,500, 4 Bdrms, 2274 SqFt, 1973 YrBl, 10-5-12;  
Previous Sale: \$56,000, 06-25-73
- 915 Reliez Station Road, \$600,000, 3 Bdrms, 1523 SqFt, 1959 YrBl, 10-3-12;  
Previous Sale: \$40,000, 06-15-72
- 1 Rimrock Road, \$1,325,000, 4 Bdrms, 2962 SqFt, 1979 YrBl, 10-8-12;  
Previous Sale: \$1,250,000, 07-01-11
- 3216 Ronino Way, \$1,185,000, 3 Bdrms, 3463 SqFt, 1984 YrBl, 9-28-12;  
Previous Sale: \$545,000, 08-12-93
- 3199 Stanley Boulevard, \$730,000, 3 Bdrms, 1520 SqFt, 1950 YrBl, 10-5-12;  
Previous Sale: \$715,000, 04-18-08
- 1216 Upper Happy Valley Road, \$1,300,000, 3 Bdrms, 2118 SqFt, 1953 YrBl, 10-3-12;  
Previous Sale: \$855,000, 07-03-00

### MORAGA

- 908 Augusta Drive, \$710,000, 3 Bdrms, 1819 SqFt, 1988 YrBl, 10-3-12;  
Previous Sale: \$685,000, 06-19-03
- 3 Benedita Place, \$625,000, 3 Bdrms, 2095 SqFt, 1984 YrBl, 10-4-12;  
Previous Sale: \$150,000, 03-10-97
- 89 Brookfield Drive, \$1,320,000, 5 Bdrms, 4133 SqFt, 1964 YrBl, 9-27-12;  
Previous Sale: \$1,200,000, 12-12-03
- 1026 Del Rio Way, \$905,000, 4 Bdrms, 2102 SqFt, 1969 YrBl, 10-5-12;  
Previous Sale: \$405,000, 06-23-95

... continued on page D7

## Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

none



# The RE/MAX Collection

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**Alamo** ~ Wonderful remodeled 5/3 single story 2800+ sf home with separate den plus office. Kitchen open to family room w/cozy fireplace. Private backyard w/pool & spa! Walk to 12 years of top ranked schools!  
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Todd Carter 925.914.5844



**Lafayette** ~ This is a special house with charm & character sitting on 1.2 acre's of nearly level land. 4/4 + self contained 1/1 cottage with kitchen. Large patio and pool, close to town. This is a wonderful opportunity! **\$1,490,000**

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**Lafayette** ~ Custom designed home w/3,517 sf is set among 27 Oaks w/unparalleled views of Lafayette & W/C. 3 gas fireplaces, granite countertops in gourmet kitchen, Au Pair/office, inset ceiling & crown moulding, Luxurious Master Suite & more!

Tim Shields 925.457.2222  
soldbytimg@gmail.com



**Lafayette** ~ Lowest priced 3Bedroom home in town! Great, quiet neighborhood, Acalanes School Dist. Perfect starter home. Wood burning fireplace. Detached studio for many options.

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**Orinda** ~ Lovely upslope lot in terrific neighborhood of impressive homes, close to downtown Orinda, BART, and schools! Wonderful opportunity to build your dream-home! **\$220,000**

Vicky Van Brocklin 925.785.6380  
Vicky@vickyvanbrocklin.com



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## Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

# How Does Your Garden Grow?

... continued from page D1

The optimum is a consistency that when rolled in the palm of your hand will be a bit gritty, smooth, sticky, dry, soft, crumbly, and dark like chocolate cake. As soon as you start increasing the health of your soil, you will start seeing results.

Since I focused on soil amendments and cover crops in my last issue, you may wonder why I am again preaching the benefits of nutrient rich dirt. Many readers contacted me after that article was published to complain about the lack of a bountiful vegetable harvest. The number one question was, "Should I replace my soil?"

One gardener with a bushel of practical knowledge when it comes to maintaining great soil to reap great crops is the publisher of Lamorinda Weekly, Andy Scheck. His tomatoes and zucchinis are so plentiful that he cans 20 pounds in an evening, drinking the sweet juice as he goes. I finally caught up with this busy man between videotaping the politicians, printing the latest newspaper, and, of course, puttering in his garden.

### Interview with Andy Scheck

**Cynthia:** What is your secret to growing a great garden?

**Andy:** As you know, Cynthia, working the soil is the most important work you can do for your garden. We compost and maintain the compost regularly to "harvest" soil twice a year.

**Cynthia:** Can you explain how you compost?



Compost bin filled with chipped garden waste

**Andy:** When I came to California from Germany I bought a chipper for composting. Kitchen scraps, weeds, flowers (except for roses because they have thorns), leaves, and grass are composted. I water it occasionally and then let it sit for four or five months. Before I use it, I add chicken manure, Monterey beach sand, and two bags of regular gardening soil. It makes a nice mix. When it looks and feels ready, we "harvest" this new soil and spread it around the yard. I get about 24 cubic feet each time.

**Cynthia:** Have you always gardened, Andy?

**Andy:** I did a little gardening when I was living in Germany. When I was 19, I bought a piece of land to later build my house on and my uncle asked if he could use it as a garden meanwhile. He taught me to garden. We grew mainly lettuce, potatoes, and strawberries.

**Cynthia:** Tomatoes are one of your favorite crops and you grow ample amounts. Lamorinda isn't the best area for tomatoes, how do you do it?



**Andy:** First of all, as I already stated, I compost and enrich the soil twice a year. I irrigate with drip, which helps to keep down the weeds. For my tomatoes, I keep only one stem, letting the stem grow tall, breaking off any leaves that are close to the ground to keep



Wire cloth helps to keep gophers out

the plants clean and disease free. If a leaf turns brown, I cut it off. Lots of sunshine and air circulation are key to success. My gopher barrier has also been successful because gophers are smart. It's important that every corner is wired. We harvested over 200 pounds of tomatoes this season and we've been eating them from July through November. There is nothing better than this!

**Cynthia:** What about your giant sunflowers?

**Andy:** I can't take credit for the sunflowers. Last year Eric Dausman gave me some plants he had grown from seeds. I planted them and grew gigantic sunflowers. I was lucky to capture a photo of a squirrel dining on the sunflower "balcony."

**Cynthia:** Any final tips for our readers?

The best part of gardening is being in nature. Everyday we spend at least 20 minutes walking around the garden seeing what's new and changed. We become one with the garden. Gardening is a huge pleasure. We eat berries for breakfast, add cucumbers to our salads, eat tomatoes right off the vine, and experiment cooking zucchini in many different ways. Everything is healthy, and tastes better fresh. And I like being green, knowing we are doing our part to keep pollution at a minimum.

**Cynthia:** Thanks Andy for all this useful information. All gardeners enjoy sharing their bounty and we benefit from your experiences.

How does your garden grow? Follow Andy's tips and you'll be smiling this time next year.

*Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide on page D10*



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## ***New Listing in Happy Valley Glen***

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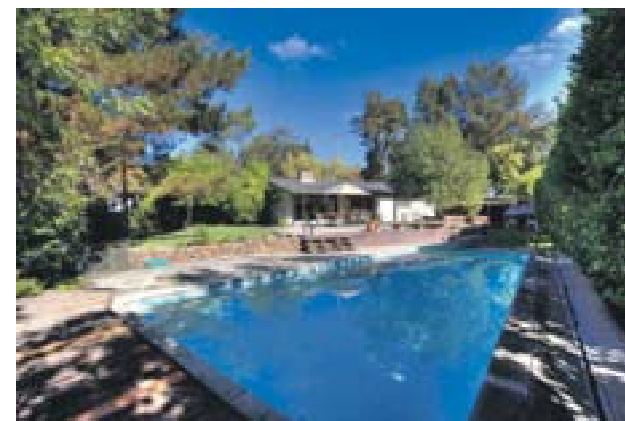
Situated on a private lane in a beautiful and serene natural setting, this traditional ranch style home enjoys a premium location -- walking distance to vibrant downtown Lafayette and BART. The property is also part of one of the most sought after neighborhoods in Lafayette -- Happy Valley Glen. The location is truly special, and the schools are among the finest in the State.

This charming three bedroom home has beamed ceilings, beautiful hardwood floors in the living room, family/dining room, hall, and all three bedrooms. With a large second family room/office, it has a wonderful livable floor plan to suit today's life styles. The kitchen family/dining area opens out to a large, private backyard with a safety fenced pool, raised gardens, playhouse, patios, lawns, entertainment and play areas.

**Top Rated Schools: Happy Valley, Stanley Intermediate, Acalanes High School**



Snap with smartphone to view virtual tour



\*per Public Records





# How to Create a Luxury DIY Design Project

By Ann McDonald



*The Moraga dining room, featured on ivillage, includes a custom dining table, vintage re-purposed chairs, menswear upholstered seats, new lighting, smooth textured walls and custom colored paint, designed by Ann McDonald, Couture Chateau [www.couturechateau.com](http://www.couturechateau.com)*

*Photo Peter Medilek, Inc. [www.petermedilek.com](http://www.petermedilek.com)*

When setting out to complete a transitional suburban re-design for two stylish Moraga homeowners, my design team took some color risk so the space would feel fresh. We said goodbye to beige, hello to gray.

The project, which was featured on ivillage's "16 Beautiful Fall Décor Trends 2012," encompassed several rooms. For the dining room, a neutral envelope with saturated brown walls was pulled together with a punch of gray. The 5 Stage Custom Gray Lacquer on the vintage repurposed dining chairs with blue undertones and menswear stripe upholstery shared base hues with the rug border, custom wall color and table finish so the eye read them compatibly. Three ceiling spots were designed to center on the custom table and art lighting highlighted a collection on the walls.

In conjunction with the dining room, we also tackled a lack-luster entry hall by reworking the wall texture and molding and building a custom console table from historic columns. In the master bedroom, custom architectural details, additional paint treatments, custom furniture and bedding were added to maintain the chic aesthetic upstairs.

The luxurious space absolutely sings at night.

As a designer, I believe two things: First, luxury lives in all of us. Second, everyone is capable of designing their own home beautifully; sometimes we just need encouragement.

Every project has that moment when you want to throw in the towel and retire your staple gun, but the following steps will help you walk through your own Lamorinda Luxury Project, do-it-yourself (DIY) style.

### **The first step? Set clear goals.**

I believe luxury must answer these three questions: What do you care about? What do you value? What is your intent? For the Moraga project, the client wanted a beautiful space without too much distraction. What are your goals for the space at hand? At the beginning of any project, start with a blank slate. Remove the finish on a chair you want to repaint, clear the room, clean the space. Write down the specific things you need to do to create that blank slate. Much like applying makeup, you need to clean your face before applying more. Even if you intend to use your existing pieces, this process enables you to be precise about your intent. Without it, a design project will never be luxury. It simply won't.

### **Step two: Make good choices.**

We sourced a vintage dealer for solid wood chairs that could be modified and refinished. With well constructed product, you can change anything.

... continued on page D8

## Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

... continued from page D2

### MORAGA ... continued

1283 Larch Avenue, \$920,000, 5 Bdrms, 2510 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 9-27-12

36 Merrill Circle #S, \$2,173,500, 5 Bdrms, 4904 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 9-28-12;

Previous Sale: \$1,380,000, 10-26-99

3 Netherton Court, \$1,120,000, 4 Bdrms, 2552 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 10-4-12

21 Sanders Ranch Road, \$1,065,000, 3 Bdrms, 2974 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 10-4-12;

Previous Sale: \$469,000, 03-13-87

54 Shuey Drive, \$1,180,000, 4 Bdrms, 2304 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 10-3-12;

Previous Sale: \$990,000, 04-12-10

1049 Silverhill Drive, \$965,000, 4 Bdrms, 3053 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 9-27-12;

Previous Sale: \$350,000, 01-31-94

### ORINDA

156 Alice Lane, \$1,384,000, 5 Bdrms, 3601 SqFt, 1990 YrBlt, 9-28-12;

Previous Sale: \$1,325,000, 03-22-01

174 Canon Drive, \$923,000, 4 Bdrms, 2112 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 10-5-12

2 Casa Vieja, \$1,550,000, 3 Bdrms, 4192 SqFt, 2004 YrBlt, 10-2-12;

Previous Sale: \$340,000, 08-01-03

173 Crestview Drive, \$928,000, 3 Bdrms, 2445 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 9-28-12

428 Dalewood Drive, \$1,600,000, 5 Bdrms, 3412 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 9-27-12;

Previous Sale: \$885,000, 07-31-92

640 Greystone Terrace, \$1,460,000, 4 Bdrms, 3372 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 9-28-12;

Previous Sale: \$1,240,000, 05-22-03

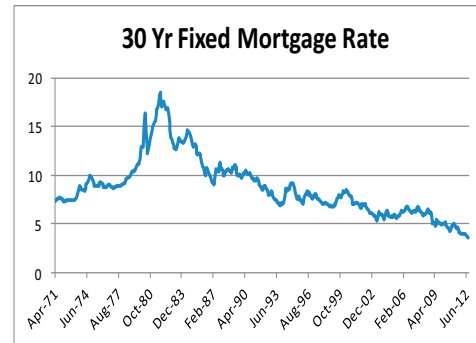
26 Knickerbocker Lane, \$680,000, 2 Bdrms, 1385 SqFt, 1977 YrBlt, 10-2-12;

Previous Sale: \$675,000, 11-17-11

## CLAREMONT HOME LOANS

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### HISTORIC LOW RATES



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# Moraga Neighbor Spearheads Roadside Makeover

By Cathy Dausman



From left: Rena and Dave Munson, Linda Foley, Kathy Shieman, Meridel Moulton, Linda Miller, Elaine Smit, John Moulton, Margie Mason, Jan Catalano, Kathy Flett, and Marcia Fisherkeller. Photo Al Foley

“I think I opened a Pandora’s box,” laughs Linda Foley of Moraga. If she did, it will soon be filled with daffodils, thanks to a neighborhood group calling itself the Stafford Groomers. Stafford, as in Stafford Road, which is only about 30 feet long, intersects the Lafayette Moraga Regional Trail at roughly the five mile westbound marker, connecting St. Mary’s Road and Fernwood Drive. No one lives on Stafford Road, but traffic flows regularly in and out of the adjacent Rheem Valley Manor neighborhood. Until now, it has been a dull, dry, weed-strewn landscape. Foley’s plan “to create a welcoming entry to our neighborhood” initially involved a two-hour work crew October 13. She sent e-mail requests to neighbors and members of the Moraga

Garden Club, which she is president, and more than a dozen volunteers showed up, shovels and weed whackers in hand. The group filled more than 20 bags of debris. Advanced Tree Service sent Lou Edwards to help with poison oak removal; his company will rototill the soil when conditions are favorable. Foley said Moraga’s Parks and Recreation Department will plant the “hundreds” of daffodil bulbs donated by Moraga Garden Club, giving the area “a much needed face lift.” She called the initial work-party response “inspiring, fun and rewarding.” A second work party was held October 20. Foley invites anyone who wishes to participate in additional work parties to e-mail her at [lindafoley@me.com](mailto:lindafoley@me.com).

# How to Create a Luxury DIY Design Project

... continued from page D6

Solid wood can be lacquered, refinished, repaired, repainted, rebuilt – heck, it can even be stripped and chipped.

### Step three: Customize.

Your home should reflect you, not someone else. The intent is to enhance your life. Your home should be a refuge and encourager, a place of safety and order. It’s hard out there! Creating spaces that nurture us is important. It can be as simple as monogramming a favorite sham, adding trim to a pre-fab drapery panel or painting a colorful line in a groove on a piece of furniture you love. Whatever it is, make it you.

### Step four: Concentrate.

What does excellence look like for your DIY project? Proper hand sanding, distressing and curing of custom finishes cannot be rushed. Write down the details and you can roadmap your professional outcome. Remember, we eat the elephant one bite at a time.

### Step five: Complete.

What should your completed DIY project look like? Prepare for that completed look from the start. Honestly address realistic timelines, proper supplies and appropriate work space. I always consult clients undertaking DIY to budget three times the hours they think, purchase

all the proper supplies before starting and create a formal work space as if they were completing the job for a make-believe client. It’s all right to use your garage to re-finish a piece of furniture, just treat it as a formal studio during the time it takes. Preparation means you won’t be putting anti-scratch pads on your new dining chairs as friends walk in for a dinner party! Take pride in being the strong finisher and move forward in life.

Isn’t that what life is all about anyway?



Ann McDonald is the Founder/CEO of Couture Chateau in Orinda, a luxury interior design firm. She is an associated member of the International Interior Design Association (IIDA) and the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO), and was recently quoted by Elle Decor on Luxury Now. She teaches design seminars: “How to Run your Project like a Pro” in addition to blogging on design: [www.couturechateau.com](http://www.couturechateau.com).

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Ana on left

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## Lamorinda Home Values are Rising

	October 2011	October 2012	% Change
Lamorinda: Properties Sold	39	57	46%
Average Sale Price	\$889,000	\$1,033,000	16%

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Go to [www.Lamorinda.net](http://www.Lamorinda.net), or call 925-550-2353

To see details on all 57 Lamorinda homes that closed in October, go to:  
[www.Lamorinda.net](http://www.Lamorinda.net)

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## Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for November

*"...a man can do no better than to eat and drink, and find satisfaction in his work." -Solomon, Ecclesiastes 2:24*

When I was writing *Chicken Soup for the Gardener's Soul*, we received a very sweet story from a nurse working in an eldercare facility. Penned on a napkin, she described their garden project for November - planting bulbs. Each person was given a specific task from digging the hole, taking the bulb out of the bag, putting the bulb in the hole, adding a scoop of bone meal, covering it with soil, and watering it. One gentleman who had difficulty understanding the directions was asked to just watch. At the end of the planting when everyone looked at their work they were confused as to why every bulb sat on top of the dirt when each person had done their job very carefully. They all looked to the man who was told to observe and questioned him. He retorted, "You told me to keep my eye on the bulb and I did just that!" Although the narrative didn't make it to the top 101 stories published, I always chuckle every November when I begin planting my bulbs.

- DIG bulbs now. Bulbs that do well in our area, including tulips, crocus, daffodils, are available in nurseries and garden centers. Dig the holes a little deeper and stack three bulbs with different blooming times for a longer show of color come spring. Plant naturalizing Narcissi six inches apart so that roots don't strangle each other or compete for water and nutrients.
- PLANT azaleas this month. If the weather is dry, make sure to keep the ground moist around the plants. Hanging begonias add a special splash of fall color to your patio.
- TAG trees that you'll want to cut down or prune heavily this winter. If you will use the wood for fires, make sure to dry it for at least a full year. Dried firewood produces 7,700 BTU of energy when burned, while green, wet wood produces 5,000 BTU.
- SCRATCH a limb to find out if a limb or branch is alive or dead. If it's green it's still alive.
- REDUCE the risk of infection from tick bites for you and your pets with Tanglefoot's new product, Tick Twister. This small device attaches to your keychain or pet's collar for safe and easy removal of ticks.
- FIX vent screens, broken foundation, and roof shakes and remove brush and wood piles from the perimeter of your house to deter mice and rats from building their winter abode.
- KEEP your heart healthy by including several of these fall harvest power foods in your meal planning: dark leafy greens, broccoli, pomegranate, and nuts. You'll get antioxidants, fiber, phytonutrients, plus calcium, magnesium, and potassium.
- CLEAN UP container plants before bringing them indoors for the winter.
- REPAIR garden tools and equipment before storing.
- WEED your garden once again, then, cover your yard with mulch. If you have a large space, consider contacting a local tree trimming service to ask for free wood chips. They are great at preventing weeds and making your garden look groomed.
- HARVEST sweet potatoes but don't rush. The longer they are in the ground, the sweeter they become. Wait until the leaves yellow and frost is near. Didn't plant any last year? Put them on your "must plant" for next season's healthy treats.
- SPICE up the Thanksgiving table by juicing your apples and adding seltzer water, nutmeg, and cinnamon for a tasty refresher.
- PICK your pumpkins and fairytale gourds for a November porch party.
- EXPLORE, experiment, and experience with the fall foliage in our luscious surroundings. Bring a bit of fall indoors.
- SALUTE the wild turkeys trotting through our neighborhoods. They have no clue what's cooking on November 22!
- THANKS to everyone for reading *Digging Deep*. Wishing you a Thanksgiving filled with the love of family, friends, and frivolity. Eat, drink, and be grateful for your work, play, and soil.

Happy Gardening to You!

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## ASK CYNTHIA: Reader Requests

Hi Cynthia:

At least three times a week when I return from work, turkeys are trotting through our neighborhood. They don't seem to bother my yard, but some neighbors aren't so happy with them. Should I do anything to protect my plants?

Janet  
Orinda



Hi Janet:

This is a trick question because you'll get a different answer depending on whom you ask. Turkeys are omnivores. They forage through the day for plants, berries, leaves, insects, reptiles, and small amphibians tending to feed most heavily a few hours after leaving their roosts in the morning and before sunset. (Their evening meal is probably what you witness when you return from work.) If you were a wheat or corn farmer, you'd probably be roasting wild turkey for Thanksgiving as well as Sunday dinners since in agriculture these gobblers can be a nuisance.

However, we live in rural Lamorinda and in my opinion, one of the main benefits is our proximity to nature and open space with the sounds and sights of both domestic and wild animals and birds. When I see the setting sun in my rearview mirror as I cross the Bay Bridge, I breathe a sigh of relief knowing that fresh air and natural beauty await me just a few miles away.

Yes, I am in the camp of enjoying the turkeys. For the past few years I've had several flocks living and dining chez moi. My front lawn is almost bug and weed free thanks to them devouring insects, grubs, seeds, and wild grasses. They keep down the hundreds of unwanted oaks, plums, and pines as they eat acorns, fallen fruit, and nuts on the hillside. Watching the toms puff, primp, and putt as they court the hens is entertaining and when the poult hatch, they gorge on my snails, slugs, grasshoppers, beetles, and other nasty insects that actually do damage my plants. I collect turkey feathers to use in floral arrangements and their fertilizer nourishes my soil and my compost pile.

My advice is to smile, get out your camera, and photograph these striking native birds knowing that they are protecting and enriching your garden and your pastoral experience. If you notice them munching your prized plants, hoot and holler and they'll run rapidly away... another terrific photo opportunity!

Wishing you double gobbles!  
Happy Gardening!

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©2012 Cynthia will answer one or two questions per issue as space allows. Email your comments or questions to  
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Special Country Club location amidst expensive homes. Lush setting with building site knoll and towering oaks, filtered views & total privacy.

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## 251 Monte Vista Ridge Road

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## 73 La Espiral

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**Offered at \$1,060,000**



ORINDA



## 65 La Espiral

Updated w/beautiful custom features & amenities. Very well maintained. Majestic setting, lovely gardens, new pool + views/privacy, fully fenced. Tuscany ambiance, European flair.

**Offered at \$2,195,000**



LAFAYETTE



## 1061 Glen Court

Happy Valley Glen, one of most desirable Laf. ngrbrhds. Trad., priv. lane close to town/BART. .4ac gorgeous setting, lovely lvl yd. Charming 3 bd, lite & bright, hdwd flrs, 2nd FR/Ofc. Top rated schools.

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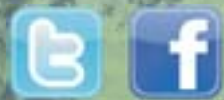
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