# Pamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 06 Issue 20 Wednesday, December 5, 2012



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# From Inexpensive to Extravagant Holiday Décor

By Ann McDonald



Photos Couture Chateau

t's that time of year again. Holiday decorations are everywhere and the pressure is on. From glittered pinecones at OSH Hardware in Moraga to finery at Nieman Marcus in Walnut Creek, how is a savvy Lamorinda resident supposed to make sense of it all? Decorate your own home? Hire it out? Spend lavishly or scour the discount stores for last year's bargains?

Moraga resident Margaret Bang starts with inexpensive, but elegant décor. "Each year I start with a base of fresh greenery, faux garland and add layers of white," she says. "I particularly like to use a mix of textured white candles because they burn non-toxic, go with every color and they always look elegant."

Stores like Costco offer 25 feet of fresh garland for approximately \$15, which can be supplemented with low cut branches from evergreen trees, boxwood or scavenged items from the backyard. Wellmade pre-lit, pre-decorated garland can be found for as little as \$60 and can adorn banisters, entries, and even be added to Christmas trees for a fuller dimension.

Local homeowners create vignettes in foyers or on porches using ribbons, holiday collections, or other unique items to add an emotional element to their holiday décor. Orinda homeowner Catherine

Soso's turquoise dining room opens to her living room where she flanks her fireplace with not one, but two Christmas trees.



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### WINTER TIPS

Cleaning and thinning your trees may reduce the potential storm hazards without compromising the shade. In some situations the risk of failure cannot be reduced without removal of branches. Remember that healthy structurally sound trees are generally wind fast even when mature.

Storm damage is usually, but not always, related to structural problems that could have been addressed with proper structural training when the tree was young. Co dominant (two trunks with a narrow angle of attachment) trunks account for many trees failures. The hazard of wind damage is higher on the regrowth of trees that have been "topped".

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OUR HOMES Wed., December 5, 2012

### Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT
LAFAYETTE	11	\$750,000	\$2,000,000
MORAGA	6	\$250,000	\$925,,000
ORINDA	11	\$750,000	\$2,740,000

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

1157 Bacon Way, \$750,000, 3 Bdrms, 1466 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 11-1-12; Previous Sale: \$420,000, 09-29-00

3231 Camino Colorados, \$785,000, 3 Bdrms, 1527 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 10-19-12

8 Crest Road, \$1,250,000, 3 Bdrms, 2271 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 11-5-12; Previous Sale: \$740,000, 04-21-00

667 Glorietta Boulevard, \$1,205,000, 3 Bdrms, 2135 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 10-19-12; Previous Sale: \$1,057,500, 05-15-09

3812 Happy Valley Road #B, \$850,000, 2 Bdrms, 1448 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 11-2-12; Previous Sale: \$1,025,000, 09-17-04

1901 Hunsaker Canyon Road, \$2,000,000, 10-24-12;

Previous Sale: \$1,500,000, 08-15-06

3372 McGraw Lane, \$1,974,500, 4 Bdrms, 3127 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 10-24-12; Previous Sale: \$650,000, 12-04-98

1483 Shulgin Road, \$875,000, 1905 SqFt, 1937 YrBlt, 10-22-12

591 Silverado Drive, \$957,500, 3 Bdrms, 1910 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 10-23-12; Previous Sale: \$383,000, 05-10-89

3936 South Peardale Drive, \$1,783,000, 3 Bdrms, 2594 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 11-5-12; Previous Sale: \$1,796,000, 08-12-11

1141 Upper Happy Valley Road, \$1,550,000, 5 Bdrms, 4558 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 10-24-12 **MORAGA** 

1997 Ascot Drive #2, \$250,000, 2 Bdrms, 1124 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 11-2-12; Previous Sale: \$189,000, 11-10-99

2 Berkshire Street, \$699,000, 2 Bdrms, 1552 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 10-31-12; Previous Sale: \$785,000, 10-17-06

1499 Camino Peral, \$461,000, 3 Bdrms, 1697 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 10-19-12; Previous Sale: \$655,000, 04-04-07

28 Lance Court, \$840,000, 4 Bdrms, 2722 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 10-19-12; Previous Sale: \$295,000, 07-05-96

268 Rheem Boulevard, \$849,000, 2 Bdrms, 1873 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 11-2-12; Previous Sale: \$187,000, 06-11-84

243 Sandringham Drive #N, \$925,000, 4 Bdrms, 2353 SqFt, 1976 YrBlt, 10-23-12; Previous Sale: \$339,000, 08-12-87

#### ORINDA

63 Barbara Road, \$796,000, 4 Bdrms, 2052 SqFt, 1977 YrBlt, 11-2-12; Previous Sale: \$414,000, 05-20-98

30 El Verano, \$781,500, 2 Bdrms, 1640 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 10-19-12; Previous Sale: \$439,000, 05-15-98

11 La Fond Lane, \$1,260,000, 4 Bdrms, 2875 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 10-17-12; Previous Sale: \$1,395,000, 03-29-05

67 Loma Vista Drive, \$855,000, 4 Bdrms, 2266 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 10-19-12

255 Manzanita Drive, \$750,000, 4 Bdrms, 2376 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 10-23-12

1 Madera Lane, \$803,000, 3 Bdrms, 2023 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 11-2-12

6 Rabble Road, \$2,740,000, 6 Bdrms, 5988 SqFt, 11-2-12

412 Ridge Gate Road, \$1,390,000, 3 Bdrms, 2950 SqFt, 1980 YrBlt, 10-18-12; Previous Sale: \$725,000, 06-08-00

241 Village Gate Road, \$750,000, 3 Bdrms, 2075 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 10-17-12; Previous Sale: \$425,000, 12-01-97

11 Westover Court, \$850,000, 3 Bdrms, 1874 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 10-24-12 118 Zander Drive, \$1,110,000, 3 Bdrms, 2285 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 10-24-12;

Previous Sale: \$1,350,000, 07-14-05

### Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

#### **ORINDA**

Hall Drive, 94563, LXS Trust Fund, 10-22-12, \$748,350, 1898 sf, 4 bd



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Concord ~ Discover the potential! Great level lot, 12,240 sq. ft., approx. 80' x 152'.

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Concord ~ Great opportunity for investors/ first time buyers. Quiet court & updated throughout. New paint, carpet, windows, appliances & front landscaping make this a lovely home. Conveniently located near BART, freeways & downtown. \$258,000

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

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Land in Briones and Alhambra Valley ~ Parcels available from 56 to 100 acres. Beautiful views, multiple building sites, some parcels are sub dividable. Less then 20 min. to Lafayette/Orinda \$750,000 to\$2,000,000

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# From Inexpensive to Extravagant Holiday Décor

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Photo Couture Chateau

She says she is always on the lookout for what might work. "Sometimes it's that 'thing' that finds you. It's almost never in your budget but it's a must have item that is true to how you envision your holiday home," Soso says. "It becomes a treasure and delight from year to year. You use it and embrace it. But you have to be open to seeing it."

Lamorindans wanting a more extravagant look adorn the base of Christmas trees with silk taffeta tree skirts or fabricated multi-use gift boxes. Others get ideas from department store displays, in magazine spreads – or in one of the many gift catalogues clogging mailboxes this time of year.

So what is this year's hottest holiday trend?

"Custom trees are all the rage with the high-end," says Daniel Coxon, assistant project manager at Couture Chateau in Orinda. The firm recently spent more than two weeks custom dipping and painting a faux tree to create a striped look and created custom ornaments for a unique yellow-themed Christmas tree. "We just waited for the inspiration to hit and once it did ... well, wow!"

Whether choosing the inexpensive or extravagant, Lamorinda homes are sure to be beautifully dressed for the season. For more holiday décor ideas, visit www.couturechateau.wordpress.com.

Ann McDonald is the Founder/CEO of Couture Chateau, a luxury interior design firm in Orinda.

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Patty and Gene live in Lafayette with their three Shelties and have been actively involved in the community, especially the schools where Patty was a high school teacher and varsity tennis coach in the San Ramon School District. Gene was past president and CEO of CSE Insurance Group in San Francisco prior to joining the real estate industry.

Turning the **probably into the possible** is the attitude of the Cronin Team as they align themselves with Pacific Union, a company with 21 offices focused on personalized service and innovation.

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### Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

# Hoe, Hoe, Hoe-A Berry Merry Holiday!

By Cynthia Brian

"Families are like fudge - mostly sweet with a few nuts." Author Unknown



Fuju persimmons and tangerines are December treats. Fujus can be eaten like apples. Eggplants are still growing in the garden.

Photos Cynthia Brian

oming from a large Italian family and having harvested walnuts for most of my life, I know a thing or two about nuts. At Christmas one of the annual homemade packages we gave to friends and relatives included a beautiful display of candied and savory walnuts. Conveyor belts would take the nuts up to the top of the dehydrator barn in November and by early December, our personal supply became the focus of my mother's culinary expertise. We'd cook up batches of rocky road fudge, persimmon pudding, and Italian fruitcakes, all boasting the ubiquitous walnuts, plus apricots, peaches, and pears we had dried during the summer. Perhaps because I had spent one too many summers in the boiling hot cutting fruit shed, or culled one too many green-hulled walnuts, for years I could never eat any of our creations. In fact, I often wondered why everyone raved about our labor intensive, nature-born gifts. "Why don't we just buy people presents from the Sears & Roebuck catalogue like everyone does?" was my constant lament. (The Sears & Roebuck catalogue was the haute retail source in our rural environment.)

In today's cyber speed world, the travails of a farmer seem far removed from living in the big city buzz. It's so easy to go online and with the click of a button, order anything from anywhere at any price and have it delivered speedily. Yet, today more than ever, homegrown, hand-made, and personally crafted gifts are greatly appreciated for the personal attention that goes into each. Not only are from-the-heart offerings gaining celebrity status, decorating with nature in mind has gained rocket speed momentum. ... continued on page D6

### OUR CONTINUOUS QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE

We are thrilled to be reunited with Pacific Union International -- the company where we first conceived Team Rothenberg over 10 years ago. As part of a strong association of distinguished real estate professionals in the brand new Lafayette office, we are excited to apply Pacific Union's innovation in marketing and technology to our clients' real estate needs. Additionally, we welcome Lisa Quiros to Team Rothenberg. As a licensed broker with years of experience in the Lafayette market, Lisa embraces the dedication to integrity, quality and results that is at the foundation of our business.





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### Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

# Hoe, Hoe, Hoe-A Berry Merry Holiday!

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From my Farm Family to yours, Happy Holidays

As soon as the last of the Thanksgiving leftovers are devoured, most of us concentrate our attention on the December holidays. We climb into attics, scour garages, and check the back of our closets digging out ornaments and lights from last year's merriment. In the midst of our decorating fury, spending time in the garden is probably not at the top of most priority lists, yet devoting a few hours at the beginning of the month to hoe, hoe, hoe will add stockings full of joy to your ho, ho, ho.

One of your first tasks is to walk around your yard to identify what needs to be done to tuck your garden in for its long winter's nap. If you have citrus in containers, you'll want to move the pots to protection, either closer to the house, a solarium, or put them in an unheated garage. For frost tender bushes and plants in the ground, cover them with crop blankets in case of a sudden freeze. Since the rains, weeds are already

sprouting. While the ground is soft but not muddy, it's a perfect time to clean out the pesky plants and cover with mulch to deter further growth and prevent erosion from the downpours. Plant the last of the spring bulbs (many are on sale now), and then take inventory of the natural décor your garden offers to jazz up the holiday festivities.

If you grow persimmons, pomegranates, nuts, tangerines, and other citrus, consider boxing them up as gifts for friends or family who aren't gardeners. Bouquets of fragrant narcissus or a bunch of fresh herbs such as rosemary, sage, chives, oregano, and mint tied with a festive ribbon make useful hostess gifts. Cut branches from pines, firs, juniper, and other conifers to swag staircases and doors with fresh garlands. Whether you have hot cider on the stove, gingerbread cookies baking in the oven, chestnuts roasting over the fire, or dried orange slices hanging on the tree, the aro-

mas of the holiday are heaven scents.

Be a style setter by bringing in the berries—cotoneaster, pyracantha, pistache, and holly. If you have not been deadheading your rosebushes, cut the rose hips to add to your mantel arrangement along with your collection of old, vintage, or handmade ornaments, magnolia cones, and leaves.

No matter how pretty your front entrance is year round, December is the month to spice it up with lush interruptions of seasonal greens and sparkle. If you have gourds or pumpkins left over from the fall, spray paint them silver, gold, or bronze. Embellish your winter wonderland with decorative birds, nests, angels, or jewels. Layer baskets with earthy moss and real mushrooms to create a mini woodland scene. Welcome visitors with trees glittering with lights and unbreakable ornaments that exhibit your personality.

Celebrate the season of wonder and magic with botanical themes that echo your love of nature. Bake a batch of fudge with nuts as well as a couple of fruitcakes using produce from your garden. Be thankful for the love and charm of family, nuts, and all.

Season's Greenings!



Bromeliads bring a bit of the tropics to the holiday season.



## Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for December

"Christmas waves a magic wand over this world, and behold, everything is softer and more beautiful." Norman Vincent Peale

Every December my entire family looks forward to gathering on our ranch where my mom, brother, and nephew decorate over an acre of land with thousands of twinkling lights, and every imaginable Christmas scene. Since I was a little girl, this was the wonder my parents weaved to ensure that Santa and his reindeer would find their way to our remote wilderness hideaway. The holidays are special because of family traditions and imagination on overload. It's been a year of exploring, experimenting, and experiencing. According to the Mayan calendar, the world as we know it is going to end on Dec. 21. Are we prepared? Let's pamper ourselves, our families, and our guests with a dazzling, sparkling season of light, love, and laughter by greening our spirit. This is your passport to outdoor pleasure, purpose, and passion.

- RAKE leaves from lawns to keep them from matting. Keep mower at a higher cutting level.
- WINTERIZE your shrubs and bushes with a dormant feeding, the last one of the season.
- DEADHEAD roses for a final flush of blooms throughout the holidays. Next month will be the heavy pruning.
- REPAIR damaged cells by eating berries. Berries are nature's brain food. Polyphenols give berries their deep colors-red, blue, black, activating proteins that break down and recycle the toxic chemicals. Blueberries are high in antioxidants, acai berries contain high levels of omega -6 and omega -9 fatty acids to help the heart, and strawberries are loaded with vitamin C.
- FASHION wreaths from boughs of redwood, pine, fir, and grapevines.
- FORAGE for fresh watercress to add to winter salads in nearby creeks or wetlands. Make sure to thoroughly wash the greens before eating.
- PROTECT tender plants from frost and freeze by moving potted plants inside or close to the house.
- WATER plants when dry as they will suffer less damage from the cold when they are well watered.
- BUY camellias now in the colors to suit your landscape décor while they are stocked as blooming specimens in nurseries.
- BAKE a personalized garden fruitcake this holiday using real fruits-fresh, frozen, or dried from your own earth. Grapes, peaches, apricots, figs, and pears are magnificent choices for a different type of holiday treat.
- DON'T eat mushrooms from your garden unless you are 100 percent certain that they are edible. Numerous look-alike champignons are toxic and even deadly.
- CUT back chrysanthemums to six inches.
- REMOVE dead foliage from shrubs and bushes and add to compost bin.
- PLANT peony, calendula, oriental poppy, and lily of the valley for spring blooms. Bare root offerings to plant now include asparagus, artichoke, rhubarb, grapes, and berries.
- USE no more than three strands of lights plugged into one cord or outlet to prevent fire.
- DECORATE with bromeliads and antheriums for a hint of the tropics.
- BE original in customizing your holiday decorating with non-traditional items from succulents to roses with lantern accents.
- ADD luster to potted noble firs by adding sprigs of amaryllis and hydrangeas to the arrangement.
- SAVOR families and friends this holiday season and every moment of the year. Growing people is the greatest gift of all.

Happy Holidays from my noble garden to yours! Ring in the New Year with a gardener's glee.

©2012 Cynthia Brian The Goddess Gardener Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com www.GoddessGardener.com 925-377-7827

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#### **40 Dos Osos**

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### 50 Camino Don Miguel

Special Country Club location amidst expensive homes. Lush setting with building site knoll and towering oaks, filtered views & total privacy.

Offered at \$545,000



### 270 Camino Sobrante

Chic, mid-century modern in best OCC location. Beautifully remodeled 3bd/2ba features vaulted ceilings, gourmet kit. w/built in ofc level out to private patio & play area; spacious flat yard w/terraced flower beds & view deck.

Offered at \$999,000



### 81 Van Ripper Lane

Great 4bd/ 3.5ba rancher on one of the best Orinda streets. Great price too - move right in or remodel.

Offered at \$1,250,000



### 71 Camino Don Miguel

Beautifully renovated trad. charmer on priv. lane in heart of OCC. Custom detail throughout - fabulous redone kitchen, gorgeous mstr ste, formal LR & inviting FR. Lovely lvl garden w/ expansive brick patio + outdoor fireplace.

Offered at \$1,285,000



#### 1 Snowberry Lane

Beautifully updated mid-century 4bd/3.5ba, 3439 sf, on .75 ac park-like setting in premium Sleepy Hollow location. New eatin kit. w/stainless Viking appliances, granite counters & hwd flrs; porcelain tile in entry & dining & much more!

Offered at \$1,365,000



### 251 Monte Vista Ridge Rd.

Stunning gated 5bd/4ba custom estate! Panoramic views of Briones! Outdoor living at its best with expansive terrace featuring fabulous kitchen. Romantic master retreat with spa bath.

Offered at \$1,995,000



#### 65 La Espiral

Updated 4bd/4ba 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



#### **60 Coachwood Terrace**

An Estate in prime location. 5bd/4.5ba, pool/spa, apx. 6000 sq ft on apx. 6.54 acres. Fabulous stone walled gardens, many fruit trees. Reflects Orinda living at its best.

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#### 1690 Reliez Valley Rd.

Fab 1+ acre ridgeline property w/ spectacular views of Mt. Diablo etc. Paved driveway to building site w/utilities & sewer at property. Includes preliminary plans for 4900+ sq ft home.

Offered at \$650,000



### 220 Gregory Lane

2bd/1ba major fixer on .21 acre lot that needs lots of TLC but real possibilities. Bring your contractor and investor. Good floor plan and hardwood floors. Price includes separate .23 acre lot.

Offered at \$475,000

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