

# Is Mistletoe Romantic? Not on a Tree!

By Cathy Dausman



A grove of trees in Moraga sport mistletoe in their branches.

Photos Cathy Dausman

Kissing couples seek it out at Christmas, but pity the poor Lamorinda tree playing host to mistletoe. Nat King Cole may have waxed poetic about enjoying turkey and some mistletoe, and Justin Bieber sings about being under the mistletoe, but mistletoe, like the local wild turkey, is actually a pest—a parasite.

Okay, it's technically only hemiparasitic, which means that it actually can exist on its own, although like an unwanted holiday guest it probably prefers to mooch off the nearest host-tree.

Tumbleweed-sized mistletoe clumps are common in local tree groves, and are easily visible when deciduous trees shed their leaves. The Anglo-Saxon roots, "mistel" and "tan," literally meaning dung and twig, explain just how unromantically the shiny green parasite transfers from bird food to droppings to tree branch.

Once established, mistletoe saps

water from the tree, either stunting its growth or eventually killing it. A.U.C. Davis pest management website describes several kinds of common broadleaf mistletoe in California. One affects trees including alder, flowering pear, ash, birch, walnut and cottonwood; another variety infests only oaks. A third variety is endemic to Sonoma County. There are even mistletoe varieties which infest fir trees and conifers in the Sierra Nevada Mountains and foothills.

Just how did the kissing ritual associated with mistletoe begin? In ancient times, mistletoe signified life, fertility and forgiveness. The Greeks believed it protected them from evil spirits, and armies or angry spouses in Scandinavia could declare a truce underneath what they considered a plant of peace. In 18th century England, a young woman found beneath a mistletoe ball could not refuse to be kissed; if she rebuffed a suitor, she'd

remain unmarried throughout the New Year.

Mistletoe has also been used since ancient times to treat illness. Even today its mystical powers persist. The National Cancer Institute says mistletoe is used to treat cancer, most commonly in Europe. So whether it makes you feel good or just makes you feel romantic, we bet you'll never look at mistletoe the same next year!



Alex Gailas

Recognized, Respected,  
Recommended

Buyers are exceptionally motivated!

Call me or email me for a no obligation market value of your House!

Thank you for your past support  
Happy Holidays

call Alex Gailas

Broker, President, CRS, GRI, CFS  
Cell: 925-788-0229  
Alex@AGRealty1.com



43 Moraga Way  
Orinda, CA 94563  
925-254-7600  
www.AGRealty1.com

CGextensions  
& STYLES

Appointments with Cristina  
925-886-5176

Robert Jenson Salon 999 Oak Hill Rd. Lafayette

\$25 Blowdry & Style for the whole month of December!

## Rheem Valley Convalescent Hospital & Rehabilitation



348 Rheem Blvd, Moraga CA 94556, 925.376.5995

Rheem Valley Convalescent Hospital & Rehabilitation has earned the AHCA National Quality Bronze Award for Our Commitment To Quality.

Let us provide you with Award Winning Care.

We Specialize in Post Acute Rehab – in addition to traditional therapy techniques, we utilize state-of-the-art therapy modalities including virtual rehabilitation.



## Safety by Design

Submitted by H. Wheeler



First-place Digital Design poster by Acalanes High School student William Audley. Image provided

William Audley, a sophomore at Acalanes High School, submitted two posters and waited nervously. He was excited about this contest because there was prize money on the table and he felt good about his designs. William's confidence could be counted on. A design by William last year was chosen by Acalanes school faculty to cover the academic school planner for 2012-2013.

Interested in computers and art when he started Acalanes, Audley chose Digital Design 1 as an elective his freshman year. His interest and passion grew swiftly. "I really like using graphic design tools and I really like the class. It's fun!" says Audley of Digital Design. His enjoyment of the class is shored up daily by Digital Design teacher Susan Lane who instructs students in Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop. Beyond software, Lane works to improve her students' understanding of the field of graphic design. And with each new element taught, she lets the artists go to work.

"She lets us work independently," says Audley. "It's great!" Challenging her students with projects such as the CCCIG contest, Lane seizes opportunities to teach a real life skill: designing under pressure. Audley is catching on. His safety poster will be posted in offices of over 20 school districts.

Second place in the high school category also went to an Acalanes High School Student. Kyle McQuain, a freshman and a student in Lane's Digital Design 1 class helped make it "A sweep!" according to Lane, who will also receive \$100 from CCCIG to help with classroom supplies.

Teachers go to great lengths to educate our kids and to help them make good choices. But who reminds teachers to make safe choices for themselves each day at work? Apparently, students do.

For the past four years, the Contra Costa Schools Insurance Group (CCCIG) has turned to students throughout over 20 school districts they insure to portray anew their message of classroom safety. A \$100 cash prize motivates students from Antioch Elementary schools to the Contra Costa Community Colleges to design a winning poster. CCCIG hopes fresh designs each year will capture the eye of teachers in staff rooms, reminding them to stay safe at work. In the Fourth Annual "Slip Trip Fall Prevention Student Poster Contest" the winning design in the high school category came from the Acalanes School District.

very nice pools  
verynicepools.com  
925-283-5180

We do the work. You get to play.

Maintenance • Repair • Build

Established 1977 in Lafayette, California. Serving the entire Contra Costa County area and beyond.

## ORINDA TIRE & WHEEL

at 76 Gas Station  
"On your Side for the Ride"



- Over 400 Major Brands in Stock!
- Open 7 Days a Week
- FREE Tire Inspection
- Free Tire AIR
- Shuttle Service Available



67 Moraga Way, Orinda  
(925) 253-7799

## Grand Opening Savings

Free Brake Inspection  
20% Off

Expires: 01/2013

\$40 Dollars Off on any set of 4 Tires

New Clients Only  
Tax and Environmental Fees Extra  
Expires: 01/2013

Rotation & Balance  
\$49.99

New Clients Only  
Expires: 01/2013