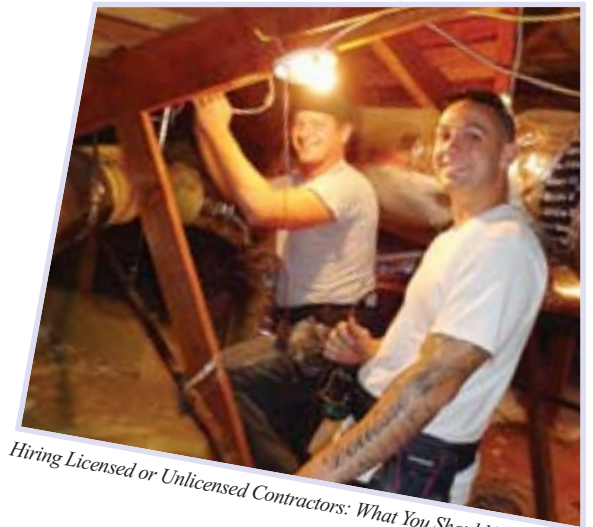


Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 07 Issue 2 Wednesday, March 27, 2013



*Hiring Licensed or Unlicensed Contractors: What You Should Know
...read on page D8*

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian **Weed, Seed, Feed!**

By Cynthia Brian

"Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant." - Robert Louis Stevenson

When is the right time to plant seeds? This is a question I have often been asked as I travel throughout the country speaking on gardening issues. Over the years I have embraced the age old farmer's timing technique for planting seeds in any climate, anywhere: if you can sit on the ground with your bare bottom and not feel too cold or wet, it's warm enough to sow!

This year the ground was especially warm earlier than usual and already I have tomatoes, peppers, and squash sprouting. Winter seemed to skip by Lamorinda as we went from autumn to spring. Weeds are not as ubiquitous as they have been in the past, yet before we sow our spring seeds, it is imperative to carefully edit and amend our gardens. If you planted cover crops such as vetch, clover, or fava beans, turn them over to add the much desired nitrogen and nutrients to the soil. Other weeds need to be manually pulled and either added to compost piles or put in the green bin. Once we have made sure our soil is rich and ready, it's prime time to buy the seed packets or six packs and start digging.

Arugula was my top pick for growing greens this season. I have planted runway serrated, rustic organic, true Italian organic, and, of course, my very favorite... wasabi. A jewel-toned blend of beets as well as purple and rattlesnake pole beans are already in the ground. A healthy crop of radiant radishes garnish our plates and butter lettuce is already curly and luscious. To add a bit of pretty to



Delicate butter lettuce is ready for the table.

Photo Cynthia Brian

the scene, I have sowed nigella mulberry rose, larkspur Parisian pink, Echinacea purpurea starlight, and rainbow poppies. They are not yet large

enough to photograph but I anticipate a complement of colors.

...continued on page D4

Finola Fellner and Lynn Molloy

present:

Spanish Mediterranean Country Club Residence



Beautifully situated on Lake Cascade, this approx. 4900 Sq Ft Spanish Mediterranean Country Club residence on .68 acres, designed by architect Alan Page of Talon Design Group and built by award winning Mark Bohon of The Bohon Group, goes

beyond its five bedrooms, four full and two half baths, private office, four fireplaces and 3 car garage. It is surrounded by lovely gardens irrigated by an onsite well, mature oak trees, a small scale vineyard, a creek and large level lawn. This extraordinary multi-level property offers unique architectural features such as hand plastered walls, arched Douglas Fir double front doors, clay tile roof with copper gutters, wrap-around terra cotta patios and balconies with stunning views of the lake, and oversized transom French doors and windows that bring a sense of light and balance to this special home.

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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	4	\$778,000	\$1,000,000
MORAGA	5	\$289,000	\$1,200,000
ORINDA	11	\$193,000	\$1,650,000

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

556 Arrowhead Drive, \$1,000,000, 4 Bdrms, 2584 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 2-20-13;

Previous Sale: \$259,000, 04-23-85

995 Carol Lane, \$778,000, 3 Bdrms, 1506 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 2-21-13

3286 Gloria Terrace, \$960,000, 4 Bdrms, 2848 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 2-26-13;

Previous Sale: \$1,425,000, 11-28-05

675 Moraga Road, \$935,000, 4 Bdrms, 4674 SqFt, 1981 YrBlt, 2-20-13

MORAGA

1350 Bollinger Canyon, \$1,200,000, 3328 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 2-22-13;

Previous Sale: \$579,000, 09-30-97

7 Carr Drive, \$825,000, 4 Bdrms, 1624 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 2-22-13;

Previous Sale: \$680,000, 04-25-03

2133 Donald Drive #8, \$289,000, 2 Bdrms, 1224 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 2-15-13;

Previous Sale: \$229,000, 06-02-11

140 Draeger Drive, \$800,000, 3 Bdrms, 1341 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 2-20-13

23 Ross Drive, \$745,000, 3 Bdrms, 1461 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 2-15-13;

Previous Sale: \$25,000, 11-12-70

ORINDA

1 Arbolado Court, \$800,000, 3 Bdrms, 1917 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 2-27-13;

Previous Sale: \$850,000, 04-17-07

1299 Bear Creek Road, \$879,000, 2375 SqFt, 1977 YrBlt, 2-15-13;

Previous Sale: \$840,000, 03-02-12

67 Brookwood Road #5, \$193,000, 1 Bdrms, 764 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 2-14-13

16 Dos Posos, \$800,000, 3 Bdrms, 2446 SqFt, 1977 YrBlt, 2-15-13;

Previous Sale: \$561,000, 01-14-00

215 Glorietta Boulevard, \$1,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 2066 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 2-14-13;

Previous Sale: \$350,000, 12-01-98

214 Hall Drive, \$743,000, 4 Bdrms, 1898 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 2-22-13;

Previous Sale: \$925,000, 08-18-06

22 Ichabod Lane, \$850,000, 3 Bdrms, 1789 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 2-15-13

121 La Espiral, \$1,650,000, 4 Bdrms, 3712 SqFt, 1997 YrBlt, 2-26-13;

Previous Sale: \$1,200,000, 05-26-99

132 Overhill Road, \$720,000, 3 Bdrms, 1334 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 2-20-13

1 Snowberry Lane, \$1,272,000, 5 Bdrms, 3271 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 2-14-13;

Previous Sale: \$730,000, 11-10-99

81 Van Ripper Lane, \$1,150,000, 3 Bdrms, 2717 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 2-14-13

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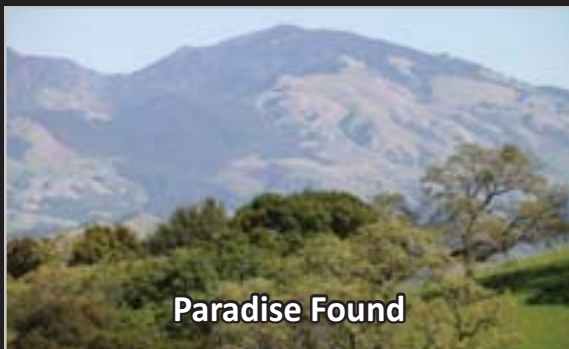
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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

...continued from page D1

Naturally, it's also important to plant pollen plants to attract the pollinators and help them thrive, which in turn helps our gardens grow. Did you know that bee pollinators provide one of every three bites we take? Honeybees have been disappearing in record numbers and butterflies have also suffered significant population declines. It is essential to eliminate pesticides and insecticides while planting flowers of varied shapes to bring the bees and butterflies.

Here are pollinator plants that can easily be grown from seed. Plant them as succession plants for three seasons of enjoyment that will also support a range of bee and butterfly species.

For Early Blooms:

Baby Blue Eyes
California Poppy
Chives
Clover
Larkspur
Lupine
Osteospermum
Pea
Poppy
Viola

For Mid-Season Beauty:

Bachelor's Button
Basil
Black-eye Susan
Borage
Calendula
Cilantro
Cosmos
Foxglove
Lavender
Squash
Thyme

For Late-Season Color:

Agastache
Amaranth
Cleome
Dahlia
Marigold
Salvia
Sunflower
Zinnia



Tangerine-colored osteospermum is a pollinator plant.



It's time to till the vetch cover crop into your soil to add nutrients.

Once you have sowed your special selections, you'll want to add a bit of organic fertilizer to feed the seed. A brew of homemade compost tea is recommended although you can purchase organic plant food at your local garden center. A regular fertilizing program is needed to keep plants growing well and attractive all season. The choice of fertilizer analysis will depend on the kinds of plants you are growing.

High nitrogen sources is perfect for plants grown for their foliage while flowering and vegetable crops prefer lower nitrogen and higher phosphorous types.

With your spring garden planted, you may now begin dreaming of the delicious crops to be harvested in the future. Water, tend, and wait!

April Gardening Guide is on D11



The flowers of the strawberry plant herald juicy fruits to come.

Photos Cynthia Brian

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Client satisfaction: a family tradition

Just Sold in Moraga



24 Corte Mateo, Moraga

Located on a cul-de-sac in Campolindo, this single-story home offers luxury and spaciousness with high-end finishes throughout. There are three bedrooms, plus a retreat/office, and two bathrooms. The remodeled kitchen with dinette opens to the family room. Dual-paned windows, hardwood floors, moldings and outfitted closets. Outdoor pool and BBQ area with views. **Sold for \$1,040,000**

Here's what one satisfied seller has to say:

*"The Holcens are **THE** real estate agents you want to hire. They sold our house in Moraga quickly and were on top of every detail. They are extremely knowledgeable, organized, friendly, helpful, creative with their ideas, and their communication is off the charts..... fantastic. They made the sale of our house as easy as it could have been. We never had a question about what was going on or the sequence of events taking place. I really cannot say much more than they are **EXCELLENT!!!** Look nowhere else, you have found them!!!!"*

Susan, Moraga seller



Wendy Holcenberg
wendy@holcenberg.com
925.253.4630
DRE#00637795

Michelle Holcenberg
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David and Abbey Cook, Lafayette, CA - 2012

"Ron and Susan are truly exceptional agents and they make a great team... truly value added partners in the real estate process. They are extremely responsive at all hours of the day. They provided sound, thoughtful advice... and weren't simply trying to earn a fee. They were extremely smart and detailed in guiding us through every step of the real estate process. And, their knowledge of the local markets -- what drives real estate value and how to execute a negotiation was exceptional. I can't say enough good things about them... best agents in Lamorinda hands down!"

Tom Barber, Lafayette, CA - 2012



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3644A Happy Valley Rd, Lafayette

Down a tree-lined lane sits this magnificent house designed by Richard Danskin. It is a single level, 4 BD- 3 1/2 BA approx. 3480 sq.ft. home on a flat .62 acre lot. It has a totally remodeled guest cottage (1BD/1BA) and a large private backyard with pool, lawn area and beautiful landscaping with private patios off of the kitchen and Master bedroom. Most of this home has been remodeled while keeping the unique architectural qualities intact like the high vaulted ceiling which runs from the front entry through to the covered backyard patio area. This house lends itself to indoor/outdoor entertaining. Showings are available by appointment only beginning March 29th.

Price Upon Request



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Hiring Licensed or Unlicensed Contractors: What You Should Know

By Don Odell

The economy has hit the construction industry hard and many contractors and construction workers are out of work. This has proven to be a savings boom for property owners as the glut of construction workers looking for work has forced the price of construction down. However, for the unwary property owner, this savings can bring risk.

For the first time in perhaps a decade, highly skilled construction workers, many without licenses, are looking for work and are willing to significantly discount their prices. But at what cost to you, the property owner?

It is not unrealistic to hire an unlicensed contractor with as much or more experience as a licensed contractor for half the cost. But, before you do so, consider that the State of California requires that anyone performing work for which a contractor's license is required have a current contractor's license.

The license does not guarantee that the work performed will be good, it simply assures that the contractor has met certain basic standards and that the contractor has basic experience and knowledge of the work covered by the license. It also assures that the contractor has a minimum bond to help ensure that the work is completed, and, if the work contemplated is \$500 or more, it requires that the contractor enter into a contract with you for that work.

An unlicensed contractor, on the other hand, can not obtain worker's compensation insurance. So if

someone working on your job is injured on the project, you could be personally liable.

Unlicensed contractors are not bonded, so if they

do not complete the work, you will have to pay to finish it, even if you've already paid the contractor.

... continued on next page



A local solar company installs, monitors, and finances residential and commercial energy systems. They are licensed to install, maintain and repair solar energy systems and for heating, ventilating and air conditioning. Some of the crew are pictured installing panels on a home in Moraga. Photos Cathy Tyson

Unlike most licensed contractors, unlicensed contractors do not carry errors and omissions insurance so if the contractor's work injures someone or damages your property, you will be faced with the difficult task of trying to recover your damages from the contractor. Also, their work is usually not documented under a written contract, leaving you with no clear statement of what is required of the contractor, and they often do not pay taxes on the money they receive, potentially exposing you to the risk of having to pay employment taxes and social security taxes for the contractor.

Further, many unlicensed contractors do not obtain permits for their work or have the work inspected by the local building inspectors. This creates a severe long term problem for the property owner, particularly where residential properties are concerned, because when the owner goes to sell the property, the owner is required to disclose that the work was done without permits, a disclosure that often negatively impacts the sale price.

So, while you can save money by hiring unlicensed contractors, doing so comes with risks and unless you are careful, you could end up paying far more in the long run for the work than if you hired a licensed contractor.

To be safe, before you hire anyone to work on your property, licensed or not, take the time to educate yourself on the risks and make sure that you have a contract in place that will protect you.

Donald Odell is a licensed California attorney with 19 years of experience representing businesses, homeowners and contractors throughout the Bay Area. He can be contacted at (925) 788-3089 or at donaldaodell@comcast.net.



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More Contractor Facts

While the Contractors State License Board says that anyone performing construction work in California that totals \$500 or more in labor and materials must be licensed, unlicensed workers are easy to find, and for small jobs around the house, usually a good solution.

The Labor Enforcement Task Force (LETF), part of the California Department of Industrial Relations is out there to police what they call "an underground economy and improve the state's business environment" to enforce carrying workers' compensation insurance and provide a safe work environment, proper payment of wages and support the collection of all California taxes, fees and penalties. In 2012, a total of 635 construction businesses were inspected by the LETF. The California State License Board estimates there are about 300,000 licensed contractors in the state, so despite undercover sting operations, the likelihood of getting caught is fairly slim. Obviously it's hard to quantify how many unlicensed contractors there are.

C. Tyson

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for April

"Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you." Frank Lloyd Wright

Greener environments cut the time it takes to recover from surgery, improve the way the immune system works, and help diabetics achieve healthier blood glucose levels. Just like eating greens provides essential nutrients to the body, so does just seeing and being around green according to researchers. While we are happily planting our spring gardens, it is essential to savor the surprises that are already smiling on us. Sweet, fragrant stock is often overlooked, yet it is a stunner with its heady scent of clove in a variety of hues. Tulips and hyacinths top the charts as they reach for the Easter spotlight while daffodils and freesias maintain their sunshine through the end of May. Strawberry plants blossom as a harbinger of the sweet red treats to come. Give your garden a lift! It's easy to introduce exquisite beauty, luscious colors, rich perfume, and nutritious food simply by planting what you love to eat and see in your spring landscape.

- **AMEND** soil with compost, manure, and organic matter before preparing garden beds.
- **MAKE** marmalade with a variety of citrus. It's so easy using both the rind and the juice. Mix tangerine, tangelo, Meyer lemon, and orange. For a healthier jam, use less sugar and check online for recipes.
- **ELIMINATE** snails and slugs now by plucking from plants or drowning in beer before April showers.
- **MIX** perennials and annuals to extend the blooming season. Many specimens marked "annuals" are really perennials in Lamorinda including snapdragon, lobelia, primroses, and fibrous begonias. Pansies sometimes return annually.
- **DISCARD** fallen blooms from camellias and rhododendrons. Do not compost or leave them on the ground.
- **RECHARGE** spent daffodils by allowing the leaves to yellow and wither. The bulb is nourished for next season by leaving the leaves attached to the bulb. Inter-plant colorful annuals as a cover.
- **DIG** holes for summer blooming bulbs including tuberous begonias, gladiolus, lilies, and dahlias.
- **WEED**, weed, weed before you seed and feed. While the soil is still moist, roots can be plugged more easily. Don't let the seed heads scatter or next year you'll have double or triple the problem.
- **WATER** weekly the bare root roses, vines, and fruit trees planted earlier in the year. Stone fruit trees will bear fruit in two to three years as long as the roots are kept moist and there is plenty of sunshine.
- **FERTILIZE** all blooming and fruiting bushes and trees with an all-purpose organic mixer.
- **BE AWARE** of late season frosts that can damage tender plants. Keep blankets or sheets ready to cover your pots when warnings of cold nights are announced.
- **BOOST** your levels of vitamin A and C by planting orange-colored vegetables and fruits including cantaloupe, sweet potatoes, carrots, peaches, orange bell peppers, citrus, and persimmons. Oranges and tangerines are ripe and ready now.
- **ENCOURAGE** pollinators to your yard with swathes of salvia, sunflowers, black eyed Susan, Echinacea, borage, dill, and thyme.
- **MOVE** your containers to sun or shade areas to maintain the desired conditions for peak performance.
- **BUY** organic, free range eggs in a plethora of colors laid by chickens that eat natural greens, worms, and insects.
- **SPEND** time in nature and enjoy the health benefits.
- **PLAN** a butterfly habitat with sedum, purple coneflower, iris, prairie grasses, bee balm, nicotiana, butterfly bush, and parsley. The flowers are nectar to the adults and the leaves nourish the larvae. Don't forget to offer a restful vista of stones and a cool drink with a fountain, bird bath, or pond for the flying visitors.
- **CREATE** a fire safe barrier around your home by removing debris, dead branches, fire wood, or other flammable substances before summer. It appears we may have a hot, dry season ahead with high fire danger.
- **TURN** on automatic lawn irrigation for a few minutes every two weeks to make sure that grass has not grown over sprinkler heads. Grass grows quickly and thickly in spring and can easily cover sprinklers making it more difficult for you to water when necessary.
- **ENJOY** Easter and Passover with a picnic in the back yard with family and friends.

May the Easter bunny hop through your garden and the forest fairies sprinkle dandy dust on all your seedlings. In plain English... Joyful springtime and get growing!

Happy gardening to you!

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Cynthia Brian

The Goddess Gardener


Cynthia@goddessgardener.com

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Cynthia is available as a speaker and consultant.






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CALL AN ARBORIST

The most common reason a tree owner calls an arborist is concern that something is wrong with a tree. It may be that some of the leaves are discolored, a branch has died, or perhaps the entire tree has been dropping leaves. Sometimes the cause of the concern is a minor problem that is easily explained and corrected. Other times the problem is more complex-with several underlining causes and a remedy that requires treatments extending over several years. Unfortunately, there are instances in which the problem has gone undetected for so long that the tree cannot be helped, and the only option is removal. If an arborist had been called earlier, perhaps the tree could have been saved. So don't wait until it's too late, have a complete inspection by a Certified Arborist at Advance Tree Service and Landscaping.

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ORINDA



New Listing

42 La Cresta

Walk to Del Rey! 4 bd+bonus/3 ba. 2469 sq. ft. .45 acre. This home has it all, open floor plan, flat lawn, large deck, around the corner from 12 years of top rated schools.

Offered at \$1,095,000

ORINDA



35 Haciendas Road

Beautiful 5Br/ 3.5ba, 3827 sf contemporary on 1.25 ac lot in prime country club location w/updated kit. & baths. Lr & Dr, office, 2 family rms, wonderful outr space w/stone patio, built-in stainless grill, pool, spa & pvt tennis ct. Top schools.

Offered at \$2,150,000

MORAGA



New Listing

349 Tharp

Remodeled, turnkey 4bd/3ba, 2470 sq.ft. rancher on a level .24 acre lot with pool, patio & lawn. Gourmet kitchen with center granite island, HW floors, cathedral ceilings & more! Entertainers dream home.

Offered at \$1,050,000

LAFAYETTE



Pending

3370 Woodview Drive

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Offered at \$1,495,000

ORINDA



Pending

79 Rheem Blvd.

Charming 2642 sf, 3bd/2.5ba hm w/ large rms, formal LR/DR & family room, remodeled kit., fab mstr bedroom w/deluxe spa ba. Private Rim Trail setting provides beautiful landscaping, grassy yds & 250sf guest cottage w/ 1bd/1ba.

Offered at \$1,215,000

ORINDA



65 La Espiral

Updated 4bd/4ba with 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



New Listing

3396 Moraga Blvd.

Just Listed! Totally charming 3bd/2ba with updated kitchen, new master bath, huge yard. Walk to town.

Offered at \$865,000

LAFAYETTE



3394 South Peardale

Gracious Colonial in Happy Valley. All exquisitely remodeled extraordinary appointments, detail. Lafayette Juniors Kitchen Tour 2009. Fabulous Kitchen, Baths. Luxurious Master Suite. Beautiful living areas. Great neighborhood.

Offered at \$2,650,000

ORINDA



New Listing

34 Oak Road

Custom Built Castle Gate Home, 4bd/3ba 2601 sf. Chef's kitchen, great light, vaulted ceilings, private setting, .95 Acres level & terrace yard, gardens, oak trees.

Offered at \$1,305,000

ORINDA



New Listing

95 Diablo View Drive

Quality 4203 sf home full of top-end amenities + fine attn. to detail, tons of style, fab. 2.66 ac view setting. New high-end gourmet kit, adjoining FR plus deluxe spa-like master bath. Easy access to incredible yard, pool, and privacy!

Offered at \$2,395,000

LAFAYETTE



Pending

18 Benthill Court

Recently renovated 4bd/ 2.5ba, 3013 sf stylish contemporary on .47 ac lot w/unobstructed views of Mt. Diablo & downtown W.C. Open flr plan features eat-in kit; LR, DR, FR; new redwood decks; Lafayette schools.

Offered at \$995,000

WALNUT CREEK



3706 Waterford Lane

Gorgeous Traditional 4bd/3.5ba Northgate home. Many upgrades! New carpet, paint, refinished hardwood floors. Huge eat-in kitchen/family rm. Formal dining & living rms. Professionally landscaped back yard. Grand master with adjoining den.

Offered at \$1,370,000

ORINDA



New Listing

156 Ardith Drive

One of a Kind! Pristine ONE LEVEL home offers you 4bd/4ba, an office, a spectacular designer kitchen w/adj fam rm, perfect indoor/outdoor living spaces w/LEVEL LAWNS/ Sunset Views.

Offered at \$1,588,000

ORINDA



68 Singingwood Lane

Orinda Downs! Exquisite 6bd/5.5ba Architect's Home, cul-de-sac, over 5,000 sf, 1.7 acres, soaring ceilings, views, level lawn/patio, lush landscape. First time on market in 21 years.

Offered at \$2,750,000

LAFAYETTE



New Listing

3680 Hastings Court

Happy Valley Glen end of cul de sac. Stylish hm in premium loc. Favorite neighborhood nr town & BART. Fabulous remodel. New gourmet kit/fam rm, hardwood flrs, glass doors/ windows.

Offered at \$1,375,000

WALNUT CREEK



2050 Shell Ridge Trail

Northgate Vineyard Estate w/ Gated 1.08 Acres, Grand main house, gorgeous grounds, guest/party house w/movie theatre, diner style game room + newer salt-water pool, 5-car garage.

Offered at \$2,400,000

THE VILLAGE ASSOCIATES:

Ashley Battersby

Patricia Battersby

Joan Cleveland

Shannon Conner

Joan Eggers

Linda Ehrich

Joan Evans

Linda S Friedman

Marianne Greene

Dexter Honens II

Anne Knight

Susan Zeh Layng

Art Lehman

Charles Levine

April Matthews

Karen Murphy

Ben Olsen

Sue Olsen

Tara Rochlin

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Amy Rose Smith

Molly Smith

Jeff Snell

Lynda Snell

Clark Thompson

Angie Evans Traxinger

Ignacio Vega

Terri Bates Walker

Ann Ward

Dan Weil

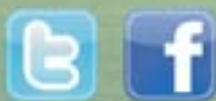
Margaret Zucker

Visit www.villageassociates.com

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Friday after 5 PM for Open House listings



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