

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 08 Issue 20 Wednesday, December 3, 2014



Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for December ...read on page D9

Holiday Traditions, from Then Till Now

By Chris Lavin



Deb Potter of Moraga grew up on the East Coast with single candles in the windows during the holidays, so she continues the tradition at her home in Moraga each year. The neighbors now expect to see them.

Photo Chris Lavin

Deb Potter of Moraga remembers the event distinctly. It was after Thanksgiving, she was a little girl, and she'd been counting the days to Christmas. Finally it was Christmas Eve night, and her father urgently called her outside to see something special.

"He said, 'Debbie, come here!' and it was a red blinking light slowly moving across the sky," said Potter, who was growing up in Philadelphia and now lives on a cozy cul-de-sac at the edge of Moraga. "I climbed into his lap, leaned back and looked up, and there it was." Her father could sense her

wonder, and he wrapped his arms around her. "That," he said, "is Santa's sleigh, and he's coming tonight!" Potter was thrilled.

Fast forward to 2014, when Potter is, ironically, a flight attendant (she suspects now that what her father pointed out was a plane, but she will not testify to that in court), and the traditions continue. She keeps an eye on the sky for her relatives and neighbors. Her neighborhood has come to expect the single candles in the windows of her home, electric candles she has carefully arranged and put there for 19 years during the holiday season.

Growing up in Philadelphia, Potter loved the simple tradition on the East Coast of putting single candles in windows to signify the holidays, and she has continued it ever since. She is about 19 years before her time, according to holiday decorating aficionados – because throughout Lamorinda the holidays have taken on a more secular, simple feel. Fewer lights, less ... hoopla.

"I would say that it's more rustic, it's more natural," said Susan Marconi, a home goods buyer at Across the Way in Moraga. "There are lots of boughs, deer antlers – it's natural. It's foraging from the earth, and simple is better. Burlap is big, for instance. Burlap is everywhere this holiday season."

In other words, gone are the days when neighbors competed with neighbors for the most spectacular display, ala how Chevy Chase blew out the electricity in his neighborhood when he plugged in his lights in the movie "Christmas Vacation." That would never happen here, Marconi says.

... continued on page D4



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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	13	\$500,000	\$1,800,000
MORAGA	11	\$355,000	\$1,305,000
ORINDA	4	\$850,000	\$2,750,000

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

- 860 Acalanes Road, \$801,000, 3 Bdrms, 1528 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 10-24-14
804 Avalon Avenue, \$1,225,000, 4 Bdrms, 2167 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 10-29-14;
Previous Sale: \$215,000, 08-14-87
3366 Carlyle Terrace, \$1,045,000, 4 Bdrms, 1730 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 10-24-14;
Previous Sale: \$780,000, 09-18-09
36 Deer Trail, \$1,525,000, 2 Bdrms, 2070 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt, 10-28-14
525 Florence Drive, \$880,000, 3 Bdrms, 1468 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 10-23-14;
Previous Sale: \$791,500, 08-09-07
1101 Magnolia Lane, \$1,160,000, 3 Bdrms, 1996 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 10-28-14;
Previous Sale: \$300,000, 06-08-99
3279 Mt. Diablo Court #20, \$552,000, 2 Bdrms, 1386 SqFt, 1987 YrBlt, 10-24-14;
Previous Sale: \$399,000, 09-23-09
699 Old Jonas Hill Road, \$1,800,000, 4 Bdrms, 2745 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 10-23-14
1239 Quandt Road, \$1,020,000, 4 Bdrms, 1944 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 10-29-14;
Previous Sale: \$280,000, 05-01-97
3777 Sundale Road, \$500,000, 2547 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 10-24-14
1071 Sunrise Ridge Drive, \$1,045,000, 4 Bdrms, 3572 SqFt, 1998 YrBlt, 10-22-14;
Previous Sale: \$761,500, 03-23-00
3319 Sweet Drive, \$775,000, 3 Bdrms, 1226 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 10-24-14;
Previous Sale: \$725,000, 12-19-05
3147 Windsor Court, \$1,052,000, 3 Bdrms, 1592 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 10-21-14

MORAGA

- 2059 Ascot Drive #213, \$355,000, 2 Bdrms, 1193 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 10-30-14;
Previous Sale: \$355,000, 10-29-04
12 Buckingham Drive, \$940,000, 4 Bdrms, 1648 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 10-24-14
3830 Campolindo Drive, \$1,225,000, 5 Bdrms, 2653 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 10-24-14
820 Country Club Drive, \$649,000, 2 Bdrms, 1262 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 10-29-14;
Previous Sale: \$497,500, 10-16-09
192 Cypress Point Way, \$900,000, 3 Bdrms, 1644 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 10-30-14;
Previous Sale: \$600,000, 06-28-00
15 Idlewood Court, \$1,085,000, 4 Bdrms, 2255 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 10-24-14;
Previous Sale: \$40,000, 12-01-70
28 Lance Court, \$1,305,000, 4 Bdrms, 2722 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 10-22-14;
Previous Sale: \$840,000, 10-19-12
27 Miramonte Drive, \$560,000, 3 Bdrms, 1447 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 10-23-14
1345 Rimer Drive, \$1,105,000, 4 Bdrms, 2191 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 10-30-14
28 Sarah Lane, \$990,000, 4 Bdrms, 2142 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 10-24-14
104 Walford Drive, \$995,000, 4 Bdrms, 2011 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 10-24-14;
Previous Sale: \$870,000, 12-30-04

ORINDA

- 34 Ardilla Road, \$850,000, 2 Bdrms, 1245 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 10-29-14;
Previous Sale: \$495,000, 12-12-01
176 Crestview Drive, \$2,750,000, 4 Bdrms, 4422 SqFt, 2005 YrBlt, 10-22-14;
Previous Sale: \$2,870,000, 02-15-07
8 Darnby Court, \$1,300,000, 4 Bdrms, 2224 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 10-22-14;
Previous Sale: \$137,500, 09-02-80
147 Moraga Way, \$870,000, 3 Bdrms, 1663 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 10-24-14



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Holiday Traditions, from Then Till Now

... continued from page D1

The trend Marconi has seen coming is now in full force. "It's not so over the top anymore," she said. "People don't have lights all over the place. They are keeping it simple." She sees the trend this year as downsizing. "People are more frugal," she said. She believes the farm-to-table movement has influenced the holidays enormously, making people think of sustainable approaches to the holidays, from the food on their tables to the natural decorations in their homes.

"It should be about spending time with people you want to spend time with," Marconi said. Some items she has seen selling a lot fits that theme, including recyclable table runners made of printed butcher paper that you can rip off, lay down on the middle of the table, get it all messed up during a fun dinner, then stick it in the recycle bin. Or she also likes placemats that you can write on and recycle, or write in chalk and wipe it off. "You can write guests' names on the mats, or put a message to your children. I like the idea of making a theme over dinner, like 'Write down what you're thankful for, and we'll talk about it,'" she said. "People can get really creative."

"It's really all about the holiday spirit, no matter what you celebrate," she said. And that includes magic. Sometimes the best parts of the holidays have nothing at all do to with trees or lights or decorations or food.

So if you are 9 or 10 years old or younger, living in certain parts of Lamorinda, and you are still reading this article, stop now. Because we all know that you have heard rumors that certain members of your neighborhood might go out on a Christmas Eve night, say around bed-time, and point out a red blinking light traveling across the sky, or secretly jangle certain bells that could sound as if they might hang around a reindeer's neck. There might even be a sound of clatter on the roof, caused by a tossed rock.

But don't believe those rumors about the neighbors doing it. It's really the result of the red light blinking across the sky, reindeer harnesses decorated with bells, and the sound of hooves clattering to a stop on the roof. Honest.



Even a drive-by of the Potter home in Moraga lends itself to a secular, simple, holiday feel. Photos Chris Lavin



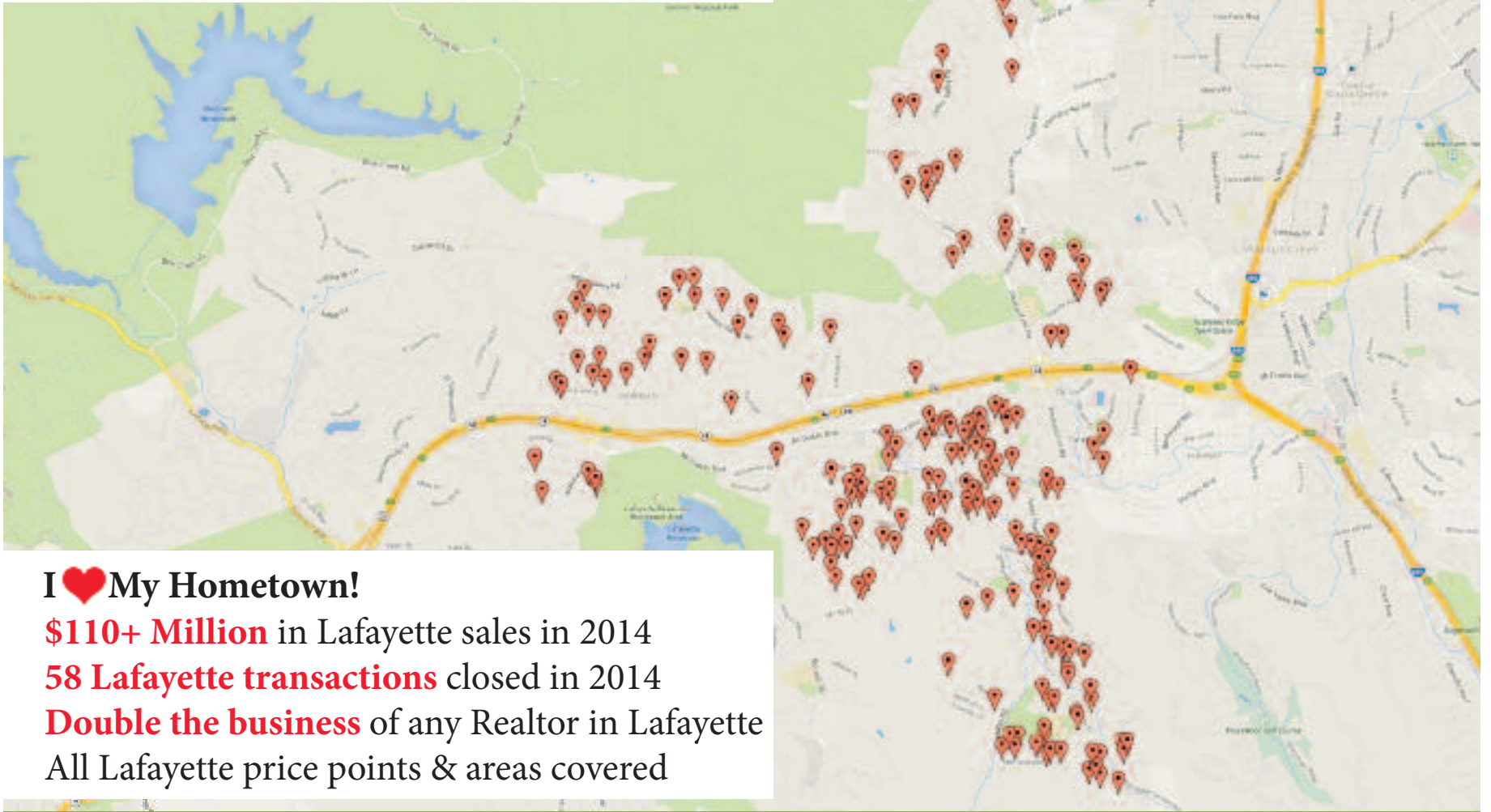
Besides the relatives even the neighbors get in on the action in a cul-de-sac in Moraga to put in the Potters' single candles in the upper story windows for the holidays, including, from left, Bridget Kelly, Sydney Reed, twins Brody and Maya Reed, Crosby Kelly, Colin Kelly, and Skyler Reed. They remember seeing the candles appear magically in the Potters' windows their whole lives.

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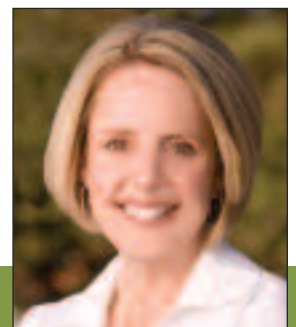
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Living Room Feng Shui for the Holidays

By Michele Duffy



A sofa against the wall in this living room would benefit with seasonal balance, like poinsettias, red throws or pillows (fire element).

Photo provided

Our home is a reflection of our inner subconscious and our aspirations in feng shui. The home is viewed as a single functional unit where all rooms of the house work together. Much like our physical body which has separate parts, the rooms in our homes are like the organs in our body, inter-connected and interdependent.

Wonderful holidays at home involve entertaining family and friends, and spending time together in our living rooms, so ... is yours ready for the crowd or in need of a Qi overhaul? Does the room feel dull and lifeless or is it brimming with excitement and the promise of conversations in hushed and eruptive tones? There is so much conflicting information about what is “good” or “inauspicious” feng shui, but if you follow these straight forward tips you will be well on your way to a magical holiday season of enchantment spent in your very own energetically balanced living room.

Good living room feng shui relies on many of the same design principles we recommend for other areas of the home or office. It is important that your living room is in an area of the home with at least two exterior walls so there is plenty of natural light. This way the area, associated with nurturing the entire family and our closest friends, has balanced energy.

Clutter must be kept at bay and eliminated altogether in your home and, in particular, the family-important living room. In feng shui a cluttered home stifles the flow of Qi (energy) and has stagnant energies — which means no new energy can enter the home. Remember what happens to water when it stagnates? It becomes smelly and dirty. Feng shui principles embrace and encourage flow and rejuvenation of Qi energy in our living spaces.

... continued on page D8



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Living Room Feng Shui for the Holidays

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This bird wood panel serves as a nice focal point in this Orinda living room.

Photo provided

Clear your living room of clutter and watch the family's finances miraculously improve. Get rid of the unnecessary, unused, and in-the-way objects, especially when we are gift giving and welcoming new things, hopefully judiciously, into our spaces.

Living room seating and furniture arrangement should be cozy, where family and friends can enjoy conversations, relax or watch TV. Living room furniture placement includes setting up the furniture in a "conversational" arrangement so people seated in the living room can see everyone entering the room.

Like other areas of the home, it is important not to overwhelm the space with furniture that is too large or with too many pieces. The goal is to maximize seating without over-crowding the space, so the Qi can circulate throughout in a healthy manner. It is considered good luck to keep the center of the living room as open as possible, without objects in the middle that prevent people from entering the room. The main sofa should be pushed up against solid walls, if possible. Furniture

or other objects that obstruct the smooth flow of healthy energy should, ideally, be removed. If you keep tripping over a basket, a chair, or the back of the sofa greets you as you enter the living room, make the adjustments you need to create a living room that functions nicely for all occasions. Coin shaped leafy indoor plants and colorful flower arrangements introduce abundant live Qi into your space.

This is a good time of year to introduce plants like mistletoe, poinsettias, evergreens and other plants into your home. Remember, not all plants are safe for children or pets, such as poinsettias, which have poisonous leaves. And, of course, if you celebrate the holiday, don't forget the Christmas tree, which will introduce yang (active) energy into your home during this joyful time of year.

Make sure that fresh flowers adorn this room but if they fade, replace them with a fresh arrangement. It also helps to understand what area of the feng shui map your living room occupies so you do not mistakenly

add too much of the wood element (plants) if it happens to be located, for example, in the metal or earth element areas.

Living room lighting should be multilevel – recessed lighting on dimmers, and soft table lamps that are strong enough for 100 watt bulbs. Use seasonal cinnamon or vanilla candles to create a cozy atmosphere, or add a few extra warm throws and seasonally hued pillows to enhance the room's comfort level.

Create a focal point in your living room by painting your fireplace a slightly different hue than the wall color or choose a large piece of art that pops in the space. Your living room artwork and imagery might include a large family portrait to enhance the importance of family members. A large mirror reflecting pleasant views from outdoors will suggest a vast expanse of pure energy. Water views welcome prosperity. Views of trees bring in growth energy while views of scenic mountains bring greater contemplation and rock-solid relationships.

Try making a few of these simple changes and then gather your family, sit back, and look into the faces of your contented loved ones and bear witness to the happy results of the new energy you created this year in your living room. Happy Holidays!



Michele Duffy, BTB M.F.S. is an Orinda resident who, since 1999, enjoys creating "Space as Medicine" Feng Shui one space at a time, as well as hiking in nature, cooking, spending time with her family; Canyon Ranch Feng Shui Master, International Feng

Shui Guild (IFSG) Red Ribbon Professional. For more info, visit www.mandalafengshui.com, email spaceharmony@gmail.com, or call (520) 647-4887.

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for December

By Cynthia Brian

"Winter, a lingering season, is a time to gather golden moments, embark upon a sentimental journey, and enjoy every idle hour." –John Boswell



Evergreens, hydrangea, and lilies create a stunning holiday centerpiece.

Photo Cynthia Brian

With less than three more weeks of autumn, we look forward to the festivities of December. Like a little child, I adore the holidays, the sparkling lights, the smells of gingerbread, and the good cheer circulating among people everywhere. However, I've always been distressed that so many retail establishments begin showcasing Christmas décor in September diminishing the enjoyment of that first weekend after Thanksgiving when yuletide revelry is traditionally unveiled.

According to a 2013 consumer research study, 81 percent of people visiting stores are extremely annoyed by the three-month premature Christmas jingles blasting from the sound system. Fortunately, most nurseries and garden centers live in the moment displaying the appropriate embellishments for the current season. It's a pleasure to witness the plethora of firs, pines, and other evergreens that will soon become decorated trees and inviting wreaths in local homes. Kalanchoe, Christmas cactus, cyclamen, poinsettia, fuchsia, anthuriums, and pansies are in bloom, brightening the darker days.

Grateful for the recent rains, our garden hours are winding down just in time to gather our golden moments making memories at fun-filled holiday gatherings with family and friends. It's recharging time. Put your feet up, drink hot cocoa, kindle the fire, and smell the last of the roses before Santa Claus comes to town.

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Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for December

GIFT packets of seeds for the holidays. Easy grow treasures include cosmos, peas, sunflowers, and morning glory. Give a wooden salad bowl filled with seeds of lettuce, peppers, cucumbers, basil, and arugula.

FEED your trees while they are dormant. Underground the roots are active and can use the nutrient boost.

PLANT nutrient rich bok choy in your garden. The fiber and sulfur compounds prevent against cancer and bok choy is rich in vitamins A and C. Bok Choy contains 100 percent of your daily beta carotene, an antioxidant that boosts your immune system and maintains vision. It's also delicious chopped in salads, steamed, or added to soups. Do you need more reasons to add this ancient Chinese veggie to your planting list?

TAKE cuttings of coleus, pelargoniums, and geraniums before you prune them back for the winter. Put the stems in a jar of water and when they root, you can transplant them to use indoors.

DIVIDE your peonies, daylilies, and bearded iris if you didn't do it last month. Exchange with friends or find new needy places in your December garden.

BRING the tropics home by adding red bromeliads or anthuriums to your holiday décor.

SAVE birds by going organic. Provide seeds, berries, and safe nesting areas. Add a few native plants to your landscape that native birds already enjoy or stop pruning roses to allow the rosehips to form and feed our flying friends.

PROTECT roses from extreme temperature changes by covering plants with 8 to 10 inches of mulch above the crown.



The bright shiny leaves and fronds of red anthurium sparkle for the holidays.
Photo Cynthia Brian

FEED the soil, not the plants. Continue adding organic materials including hay, leaves, and compost to enrich your soil over winter.

SPREAD seeds of a cover crop on any bare soil to prevent erosion, save water, increase soil fertility, and create habitats for beneficial insects.

SUPPORT a vole, mole, gopher, and rat free environment by incorporating owl nesting homes. Habitat for owls can be as simple as brush piles or construct a true owl nesting box in an old tree positioned at a minimum 10 to 15 feet off the ground. A family of owls will scarf down several thousand rodents during a season as the young consume two to four a night. No need for harmful poisons when you have a wise owl living *chez vous*.

GROW wisteria by collecting the seeds from the popped pods. Soak in water for three or four days, scrape off the hard exterior and plant in pots. Within four to six weeks, sprouts will form and you can transplant to an area in your garden that will support this very hardy twining vine. Wisteria can also be trained to be a tree. It could take five to 15 years to bloom and has the potential to live for over 500 years! Now that is a legacy of growing.

CONTINUE reusing your gray water for outdoor container plants that won't benefit from any rainy weather. Every drop you save is crucial as we are not out of the drought woods yet, even with the rainy days.

DECK the halls with boughs of holly, pyracantha, cotoneaster, magnolia cones, rose hips, or any other merry berry!

VISIT 5 A Rent a Space, 455 Moraga Rd #F in Moraga from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Dec. 13 to have your children write Letters to Santa with me and volunteers from Be the Star You Are!® charity. I'll have seeds for you, and the kiddies will get candy, cookies, cocoa, and caroling! Info: http://www.btsya.com/events_calendar.html

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WINTER TREE TIPS

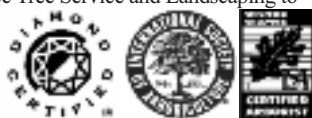
Winter brings cold and rainy weather. "While many trees will be dormant in the winter, exposure to the tough conditions can cause them major stress," says Darren Edwards, Certified Arborist with Advance Tree Service. "Minimize that stress by helping your trees through the cold months. If you take care of your trees in the winter, you will be rewarded in the spring."

Winter can be a good time for pruning most trees, while they are dormant, and pines should only be pruned in the winter months. Removal of large, dead, broken, poorly positioned limbs and corrective pruning can minimize winter storm damage, and maximize optimal spring growth.

So don't wait until it's too late, call your local Arborist at Advance Tree Service and Landscaping to help you with your winter pruning.

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Magnolia cones are bright reddish pink in December, perfect for adding to mantle decorations. Photos Cynthia Brian



A holly hedge is merry and bright.



Happy gardening, happy growing, happy holiday glowing!

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Enlarge your living area with an outdoor kitchen or entertainment space complete with a built in barbecue and the warm glow of a stone or masonry fireplace.

Garden Lights Landscape Development, Inc. is a full service landscape & pool design build firm.
We design & install with just one call 925-254-4797 • www.gardenlightslandscape.com

Celebrating over 20 years of service in Lamorinda. Bonded – Licensed & Insured License# 702845 C27 & C53

Lamorinda's Leading Independent Real Estate Firm

ORINDA



40 Dos Osos

Incredible Orinda, San Pablo Dam, Mt. Diablo views + abundance of nature surrounds this supersized parcel bordering EBMUD land. Once in a lifetime opportunity raw land sale.

\$489,000

ORINDA



56 La Vuelta

Country Club Contemporary 2,472 sf home offers bright, open living spaces & gorgeous views. Well appointed 4 bedrooms & 3 baths. Kitchen/ family room layout inviting & ideal for entertaining.

\$1,028,500

ORINDA



345 Camino Sobrante

All New Decks! Updated 4bd/3ba, 3301sf contemp. on .55ac in primo country club loc. Spacious great rm, updated kit.; hdwd flrs; lower lvl guest apt w/priv. entr; close to BART & Top Schools.

\$1,295,000

ORINDA



New Listing

207 Camino Sobrante

Contemporary 3927sf 5bd/4ba built in 1987 w/large level front yd & level back yd surrounded by trees just steps from OCC & Lake Cascade. 2 master suites, large family rm & great rm, hdwd flrs.

\$1,795,000

ORINDA



500 Dalewood Drive

Beautiful home w/lots of pride of ownership. Very private. Two Master Suites of his/hers. One level living w/large Living Rm, formal Din Rm, open Kitchen to FR w/refreshment bar. 2 car garage.

\$1,925,000

ORINDA



92 Sandhill Road

Estate setting of unmatched appeal. Large spaces plus modern design allure for appealing family living or grand scale entertaining. Fabulous views of valley & Briones reservoir/sunsets.

\$4,475,000

MORAGA



Pending

82 Miramonte Drive

Fantastic Miramonte Gardens Opportunity. Rare 1798sf, 4bd/3ba, updated twnhm w/new carpet, updated kitchen, dual pane windows, expansive bkyd/patio. Conv. locale w/2 carports & storage.

\$630,000

LAFAYETTE



3921 Happy Valley Road

Stunning 4600+sf custom 4bd/3.5ba gated estate on 1 acre in heart of H.V. Pool, pano views. Hdwd flrs, kitchen w/island, granite, & SS appls open to fam rm, poss. in-law. Close to top rated schools, commute.

\$2,795,000

LAFAYETTE



23 Sessions Road

Gated English Manor 12.18 acre 5bd/6ba Estate. Grand foyer, living, family rooms + "Club" room, deluxe kitchen, dramatic solarium + executive office. Gorgeous grounds w/lap pool/lawns, views.

\$3,895,000

LAFAYETTE



1141 Vallecito Court

Treasured Happy Valley 6bd/5.5ba estate custom built in 2006 with the finest craftsmanship & materials. Spectacular yard w/pool, spa, fireplace & level lawn. Guest house. Privacy & views. By Appt.

\$3,900,000

HAYWARD



1693 Highland Blvd.

Spectacular property w/terrific privacy! Home needs some updating but generally clean. Hrdwd flrs under most carpet, fireplace, large deck w/views; 2 parcels, home on .19ac & adjoining 2.57ac.

\$699,000

PLEASANT HILL



20 Whitfield Court

Great 2.58 acre parcel at top of knoll with views of Mount Diablo & ideal privacy. Truly special setting sites for development zoned R-10 & R-15. Wonderful opportunity for investment.

\$1,950,000



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