

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 08 Issue 25 Wednesday, February 11, 2015



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian ...read on page D10

Downsizing a Perfect Fit for this Pair

By Cathy Tyson



Marvin and Lois Kay smile in their new home at Merrill Gardens in Lafayette.

Photo Cathy Tyson

Although they looked all over the area for places to relocate, Marvin and Lois Kay couldn't be happier with their decision to move to Merrill Gardens in downtown Lafayette. About three years ago they had an opportunity to look at the building plans before ground was even broken on the project; a friend told them the two-bedroom penthouse with its own rooftop patio was one of the nicest units in the building.

The early birds were one of the first interested parties to put down a deposit to hold one of those units. They moved there in January. The one-and-a-half mile move from their previous home in Olympic Oaks, just across town,

entailed a significant amount of downsizing.

It was a challenge to downsize from their 2,500 square foot home to around 1,000 square feet. They had to part with some furniture and belongings. Many pieces went to their children and some went to consignment.

But their brand new home features two bedrooms and two bathrooms with extra storage on their lovely patio, along with cabinetry for additional storage in the second bedroom that also serves as an office. Although the unit also has a kitchen, they don't use it much because meals are also offered in the Gardens' inviting communal dining area.

Located at the corner of Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Second Street, the newest outpost of the Merrill Gardens retirement home franchise has only been open since late 2014 and is not yet full. But an open house with local dignitaries on Feb. 5 may have already enticed more newcomers. And the Kays, who have lived in the East Bay for almost all of their lives, plan to have lots of friends stop by. Married since 1948, the newlyweds lived in Piedmont for 53 years before becoming two of the first to join the newly constructed Olympic Oaks community, where they spent another dozen years.

While acknowledging the building has had a few growing pains, the happy couple is thrilled with all the staff – from the front desk person to the handyman, and everyone in between – who “are so nice,” said Lois.

It's apparent these two are well suited to the active social climate the facility provides. Exercise class, chess and dominos, bingo, Tai Chi and field trips via their van, most recently to see Beach Blanket Babylon, and movies in their own theater. The Lafayette Library is only a little over a block away, offering even more options.

Having returned just moments before our interview from a trip to Reno where they enjoyed a large Super Bowl party at the Silver Legacy Casino and visited with their son, a retired eye doctor. Marvin, who is not a gambler, said he won one dollar. Lois enjoys video poker. Their other son is a busy neuropsychologist, based on the East Coast.

... continued on page D4



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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	8	\$690,500	\$1,626,000
MORAGA	7	\$265,000	\$1,860,000
ORINDA	8	\$650,000	\$2,105,000

Home sales are compiled by CalREsource, 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 CalREsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

LAFAYETTE

940 Acalanes Road, \$955,000, 4 Bdrms, 2683 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt, 12-15-14;

Previous Sale: \$735,000, 11-06-01

3495 Black Hawk Road, \$1,401,000, 4 Bdrms, 2529 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 12-17-14;

Previous Sale: \$880,000, 04-23-02

1166 Camino Vallecito, \$1,400,000, 3 Bdrms, 2441 SqFt, 1969 YrBlt, 12-23-14

1421 Eagle Point Court, \$1,335,000, 4 Bdrms, 2216 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 12-16-14

3330 Las Huertas Road, \$1,083,000, 2 Bdrms, 2124 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 12-19-14;

Previous Sale: \$120,500, 12-12-77

5 Lincolnshire Court, \$1,040,000, 4 Bdrms, 2194 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 12-23-14;

Previous Sale: \$676,000, 04-06-01

631 Sky Highway Court, \$1,626,000, 4 Bdrms, 3258 SqFt, 1977 YrBlt, 12-19-14

1431 Sunset Loop, \$690,500, 2 Bdrms, 1114 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 12-19-14

MORAGA

1174 Alta Mesa Drive, \$825,000, 3 Bdrms, 2486 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 12-16-14;

Previous Sale: \$245,000, 10-09-85

2059 Ascot Drive #109, \$265,000, 1 Bdrms, 713 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 12-12-14;

Previous Sale: \$260,000, 09-03-04

1982 Ascot Drive #D, \$387,000, 2 Bdrms, 1233 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt, 12-16-14;

Previous Sale: \$375,000, 11-19-04

220 Calle La Montana, \$975,000, 3 Bdrms, 1775 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 12-16-14;

Previous Sale: \$820,000, 07-03-12

7 Canning Court, \$880,000, 3 Bdrms, 1620 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 12-19-14

157 Miramonte Drive, \$645,000, 3 Bdrms, 1742 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 12-22-14;

Previous Sale: \$480,000, 05-21-09

260 Valley Hill Drive, \$1,860,000, 4 Bdrms, 4425 SqFt, 1991 YrBlt, 12-22-14;

Previous Sale: \$935,000, 06-15-00

ORINDA

5 Glorietta Court, \$1,229,000, 5 Bdrms, 2538 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 12-16-14;

Previous Sale: \$690,000, 12-03-10

328 Glorietta Boulevard, \$835,000, 3 Bdrms, 1679 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 12-19-14;

Previous Sale: \$710,000, 08-02-11

39 Hazel Tree Ridge, \$1,056,500, 12-15-14

232 Ivy Drive, \$1,362,500, 4 Bdrms, 2146 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 12-19-14;

Previous Sale: \$850,000, 06-16-14

78 Orchard Road, \$1,300,000, 3 Bdrms, 2229 SqFt, 1938 YrBlt, 12-15-14

309 Overhill Road, \$2,105,000, 6 Bdrms, 3168 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 12-18-14;

Previous Sale: \$1,100,000, 08-27-13

15 Snow Court, \$978,000, 3 Bdrms, 1906 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 12-23-14

18 South Trail, \$650,000, 3 Bdrms, 1339 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 12-18-14;

Previous Sale: \$198,000, 12-19-84

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Downsizing a Perfect Fit for this Pair

... continued from page D1



This cozy living space leads to the outdoor patio.

Photos Cathy Tyson

Because they love to travel, having recently been to Cancun for a granddaughter's wedding and also back from a two-week cruise to France and Italy, the convenience Merrill Gardens offers is a real plus – housekeeping and maintenance are included in the monthly fee. "It's so nice not to worry about garbage cans and picking up the mail," said Lois, who is looking forward to settling in. Reviewing all of the many social choices, Lois adds, "What more could you ask for?" They have a car in the underground garage, adding to their sense of freedom. Looks like smaller is better for this charming couple.

"It's such a pleasure," said Marvin about thoroughly enjoying his retirement, not missing work a bit. Lois worked full time once their youngest turned 14. Marvin's dad, Sam Kay, founded the Kay Chesterfield furniture business back in 1921, with Marvin starting his career there in 1945, retiring 50 years later in 1995. The



Lois Kay does some clipping on her patio.

business used to make and sell high quality furniture, then focused on re-upholstery; while the location near the Oakland Coliseum hasn't changed, the business retains the family name but is under new ownership. A few lovely pieces, at least 40 years old, re-upholstered of course, decorate their new home.

Merrill Gardens offers independent living, assisted living, and memory care options, spread out over 89 senior living units, in studios as well as one- and two-bedroom apartments. On the Mt. Diablo side, retail shops will soon be open to the public, once occupied. An underground garage with parking for shoppers, residents and visitors is easily accessible from the Second Street side. The roof top deck is open; it features a brand new outdoor kitchen with barbecue, tables and chairs, and several large raised planter boxes for residents to use. The common areas are spacious and stylishly decorated – there's even a grand piano for residents to enjoy.

Jim Colhoun Presents 3607 Powell Drive, Lafayette

This classic style home features four bedrooms, plus a large office with full bathroom. The private backyard with pool and spa is on .60 acres with multiple lawns, terraces and oak and redwood trees. The public rooms include a beautiful living room with vaulted ceiling and fireplace, a formal dining room, also with hardwood floors, and a spacious family room and eat-in kitchen overlooking the rear yard. You'll love the location on a quiet street and the easy convenience to downtown Lafayette K-8 schools, shopping, restaurants and BART. Call Jim Colhoun for more information or visit the virtual tour at www.3607PowellDr.com for additional photos.



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Stylish Solutions

Valentine's Day Décor

By Ann McDonald



By using tools like Sherwin Williams' Chip it, you can see browns and earth tones are hidden within mint green feathers on this wreath. Tools like this, which are available online, are incredibly helpful in creating rich, layered and surprising arrangements, and equip you to make bold choices.

It's February and that means it's time to punch up your home décor with hearts, cupids and all manner of love. But how does a stylish suburbanite handle a minor holiday like Valentine's Day without descending into tacky or inappropriate kitsch?

Here are my top tips for decorating your stylish space for a fun, not too labor-intensive minor holiday:

1) Modify what you have. When design clients need a bit of bling but shy away from metallic, I like to use feathers. I love large-scale feathers and feather wreaths – I have them in several colors and stock both in quantity. One of my favorite uses is to bump up large-scale live floral arrangements in entry halls, passageways, powder rooms and master suites. Feathers bring a breezy lighthearted aesthetic to most any décor when used properly.

How does this fit into Valentine's Day homes? Simple. I have mint green feather wreaths up now in my Design Studio space and on several exterior doors. Instead of



Sherwin Williams' Chip It app shows the many layers of colors in simple candy.

changing these out for heart shaped or overtly scaled cupids with arrows, tie the wreaths onto their hangers using a simple red grosgrain ribbon.

Just like most things, subtlety rules. OK, yes, there are times I go all out kitsch. But there is also a place for subtle stewardship. When going subtle, effort and precision are keys. Tie and drape the ribbon properly and adjust so the items won't hang off kilter.

The best part? Once the holiday is over, switch out \$3 worth of ribbon and voila: You're ready for the next holiday.

2) Pick three elements and stick to them! Hearts, cherubs, paper and candy hearts are all awesome things, but remember, your home is not a retail store or the local craft fair. Those of us with overachieving hearts often come back from our favorite retail haunts, cars loaded with glitter, candy, projects, matching napkin rings and visions of recreating our favorite Pinterest board. ... continued on page D8

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The Glorious Rent-Back

By Andi Peterson Brown

Without a doubt, the Lamorinda real estate market is currently a seller's market. Scores of qualified buyers continue to flock to open houses and inventory remains tight.

But many would-be sellers looking to make their next move feel stumped by the catch-22 of the current market: they want to move, but where will they go? They need the equity from their current home for their next down payment, but they are watching buyers write a few offers before finally securing a home. If they put their home on the market, how are they supposed to find and purchase their next home in the typical escrow period of a mere 30 days?

Thus enters the saving grace for this dilemma: the glorious rent-back. A rent-back is a contractual term that allows a seller to remain as tenant after the closing. And just why is this rent-back so glorious? Because it buys the seller time. Essential, priceless time. Knowing there's an option available that provides breathing room means that more sellers are bringing their homes to market, boosting our much-needed inventory. Many sellers today are getting 30, 60, even 90 day rent-backs. While eager buyers have to wait longer to move into their new home, a well structured rent-back is usually crucial in writing a winning offer and thus a vital component to keeping our market moving.



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Valentine's Day Décor

... continued from page D6

Don't go that route stylish suburbanite! You are better than that. I am calling you stylish for a reason. Engage your power. Let's keep it simple this year. Simple does not mean austere, it just means fewer elements done well and completed.

Pick three elements and use those as your starting and ending points. This year, mine are: red grosgrain ribbon, tall candy, and pheasant tail feathers.

Admittedly, my children are grown and out of the nest, but what if you focused on doing three things really well this year? Your growing family might remember the holiday as one of love and appreciation instead of chaos and sticky fingers from paste trying to hand craft Valentine cards for every relative under the sun. Leave those crafts to the preschool teachers we love so much.

3) Purchase good quality storage and inventory. Storage and inventory keeping are the backbones of a well ordered home. Budget the proper storage into seasonal purchases. If you are taking the time to build a body of seasonal décor to serve you over the next three to five years or longer, preserving it properly and then knowing where it is when you need it may save your sanity.

Simple things like proper storage boxes, blocks of cedar, moth balls and/or eco-friendly natural herbs can keep your décor safe for years to come.

Use Google Drive or some other program to develop an inventory of your home and holiday décor. You will be pleasantly surprised how an hour on the computer will save you many hours of searching next year. You also won't re-purchase the thing you have in your shed but can't find. Been there, done that.

I am also passionate about storage and inventory because when it's time to pass your décor along to those less fortunate, those pieces and items will be in their best shape. How much kinder and more respectful it is to bring beautiful, well cared for items in proper storage to your local shelter than all mucked up in a brown paper bag. Let honor be the language of your home.

May your Valentine's Day be blessed and your home be a place of peace.



Photos courtesy Couture Chateau llc, photography by Couture Chateau llc

Ann McDonald, IIDA, NAPO, is the Founder/CEO of Couture Chateau, a luxury interior design firm in Orinda. For a complete blog post including other design ideas, visit www.couturechateau.com/blog



Behind the Studio Door with Ann McDonald

Upcoming design workshops

"How to Build a Lifetime Design Clientele and Monetize Creativity Without Selling Yourself" – for designers, decorators and working creatives from 1 to 3 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 26 at Taylor Blue Designs in Berkeley. Learn about different client types and how online access has changed what they pay for, how to structure your business model, and how to source ideal lifetime clients without losing yourself in the process. For information and to register, visit <http://studiodoor.eventbrite.com>.

"Managing and Planning a Luxury Project As Your Own Designer" – for the savvy, stylish suburbanite from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, March 20 at the Orinda Country Club. Learn how to run your own design project like a professional designer and how to utilize professional receivers to complete projects in one day. You'll also receive insider access to downloadable materials on a private online dashboard for one month. For info, go to <http://luxurydesign.eventbrite.com>.

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Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for February

By Cynthia Brian

"I believe that the reason of life is for each of us simply to grow in love." ~ Tolstoy

Love is in the air! Every February we are reminded about the importance of amour in every day living. Recently my gardening mentor, my mother, was hospitalized in the Intensive Care Unit of a major hospital when her lungs filled with fluid from an undetected virus. Picking two cultivars from my garden, fragrant narcissi and pink bergenia that she had originally given me from her garden years ago, I ambled to her bedside with a jar filled with these beloved winter blooms, only to be told by the head nurse that flowers weren't allowed in the ICU. With her saddened eyes, my mom pleaded, "Oh please, may I keep them? They make me happy." She survived her ordeal and her bouquet went with her as she was moved from room to room. I like to think that these small reminders of her home and the love she has for her garden spurred her miraculous recovery.

One of the most popular ways to show we care is to give those we love flowers. Florists sell more bouquets at Valentine's than any other time of the year. Last year over 200 million roses were grown for Cupid sales with men purchasing 75 percent of all blooms according to the Society of American Florists. Depending on what message a person wants to convey, there is a flower and a color that corresponds to the emotion. The Victorian era popularized the language of flowers with floriography, a poetic way to exchange messages with posies. Giving 12 red roses meant, "I love you. Be mine!" in the late 19th century, and it still means that today. I wonder what giving 12 red rose bushes would mean in the 21st century?

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The beautiful tulip magnolias are showing their colors earlier this year.

Get Out & Stay Out!
In Your New Outdoor Room

Let Garden Lights Landscape Development give you good reason to "Get Out and Stay Out" this summer.



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.
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Fragrant narcissi brighten the February garden.

Photos Cynthia Brian

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for February

- **STROLL** through your garden to soak in the natural aromatherapy. If you are feeling stressed, a handful of lavender florets or leaves rubbed between your palms and inhaled reduces anxiety, and increases feelings of affection.
- **RAISE** your libido with a pot of night blooming jasmine or passionflower placed bedside.
- **PROMOTE** concentration with a sachet of dried rosemary, grapefruit peels and eucalyptus leaves.
- **PICK** naval oranges, also nicknamed "the love fruit." An orange warms your heart, restores your sense of humor and brings out your sunny side. If you are feeling depressed or unloved, inhaling the peels works as a mood-elevator.
- **SPRAY** deciduous trees, fruit trees and roses with the final dose of dormant spray.
- **FLOAT** camellias as a sparkling table centerpiece and pick up all decayed blossoms from the ground.
- **PROTECT** your frost-tender plants by covering with burlap, blankets, cardboard or tarps. Water deeply before a freeze and don't touch the leaves.
- **HARVEST** winter cabbages, kale, Swiss chard and spinach. Pick the last of the arugula and allow the flowers to self-seed for another spring crop.
- **FORCE** your favorite spring bulbs by placing pebbles in a jar. Push the fat bottom part of the bulb into the pebbles, fill part way with water, set in a sunny window and wait for the science project to delight.
- **REMOVE** old bird nests from reachable spaces to allow our avian friends to build fresh, new houses for their young.
- **ENROLL** in a gardening class while the weather is wet and dark. This is a perfect time of year to hone your horticulture skills with education.
- **TURN** on the lawn irrigation system at least once a month to prevent grass from growing over sprinklers. Even in February I spent over three hours attempting to find my lawn sprinkler heads as lawn roots had spread, covering the tops in over four inches of turf.
- **GIVE** living romantic plants for Valentine's offers a breath of fresh air. Excellent choices are orchids, anthuriums, bromeliads or red aglaonema.



A beautiful pink and green cabbage is ready to be cut and consumed. Photo Cynthia Brian



A bromeliad is an easy maintenance, long-blooming indoor plant. It's great as a Valentine's gift.



Pear tree blossoms in the moonlight.



Cynthia Brian with gigantic Swiss chard leaves.

**ADVANCE
TREE SERVICE**
& Landscaping

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Your friendly neighborhood
ISA arborists Darren and Lew Edwards

Why Not to Top

Shade trees should **never** be topped. The regrowth of a topped tree is structurally unsound. Topping required by utility right-of-way pruning is bluntly obvious and sets an unfortunate community standard followed by others. Instead of topping, use crown *cleaning, thinning, and/or proper reduction* methods, set by the ISA.

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

Advance Tree Service

Your Authority on Trees and Landscape.



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Show the love this Valentine's Day with a spray from your garden. Or be bold and give a rose bush or two to really express your lasting admiration! Although what we grow may not be perfect, we show how much we care by giving gifts from our heart.

Happy Gardening, Happy Growing, Happy Love Day.

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Cynthia Brian

The Goddess Gardener

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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



170 Glorietta Blvd.

Build dream home on .98 acre lot with views near top rated Glorietta School. Ideal close in commute location.

\$525,000

ORINDA



New Listing

1 Carisbrook Drive

Beautifully remodeled 3bd/2ba ranch home on .31ac private view lot w/updated kitchen, formal dining rm, hdwd flrs, crown molding, level entertaining area in back! Walk to 12 yrs of schools.

\$975,000

ORINDA



New Listing

57 Davis Road

Curb appeal + convenience come together in a great family/ executive couple home. Walk to town yet private/ peaceful setting. Ideal floor plan, high ceilings, abundance of windows.

\$1,299,000

ORINDA



New Price

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, hardwood floors.

\$1,745,000

ORINDA



500 Dalewood Drive

Luxury home in well sought after Orinda Downs. One-time owner, built w/best quality. Apx. 2907sf w/two master suites, one large guest room, three baths, open kitchen/FR & pool on 1.02 acres.

\$1,795,000

MORAGA



10 Magee Court

Custom cul de sac Sanders Ranch 4bd/3ba 3551sf home on .68ac lot w/wrap around front porch & views. Great open floor plan for entertaining, gourmet kit, built in spa & gazebo. Top schools!

\$1,495,000

LAFAYETTE



Pending

4018 Tilden Lane

Delightful custom built family 4bd/4ba home is set on level .49 acre in Happy Valley. Functional floor plan, kitchen w/eating area adj. to family room, hdwd flrs. Patio, grassy yard, bar area, pool.

\$1,550,000

LAFAYETTE



23 Sessions Road

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

\$3,895,000

CLAYTON



Coming Soon

3 Xavier Place

Nestled in charming town of Clayton, this lovely 4bd/2ba home has .25ac lot on cul-de-sac w/lovely flat bkyd. Remodeled eat-in kit, lrg fam rm w/frplc & sliding drs to patio. Beautiful fruit trees.

Call for Price

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

WALNUT CREEK



Coming Soon

1965 Cactus Court #4

Light and bright 2bd/2ba Cascade model in Rossmoor. New carpet, fresh paint, updated eat-in kitchen, fireplace and sunny deck.

\$599,950



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