

# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 08 Issue 26 Wednesday, February 25, 2015



*Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian ...read on page D12*

## Curb Appeal

*The path of least resistance*

By Cathy Dausman



*This round garden gate window echoes a Sleepy Hollow house front theme.*

*Photo Cathy Dausman*

Beauty, it is said, is in the eye of the beholder – and a good first impression is priceless. But when it comes to a home's curb appeal, a little fresh paint, new plantings and a bit of bark dust can often work magic. Homeowners may take on a front-yard revision to freshen up an outdated look, to reduce water consumption, to

list the home for sale or a combination of these. Some prefer to the do-it-yourself method; others enlist a landscaper.

Tom Reuter of Reuter Landscaping Contractors suggests reimagining a front yard design “after 10 to 15 years.” Reuter has worked with clients in the Lamorinda area for decades; he formed his

company after first working at a local nursery. He recommends homeowners spend at least one week annually going through their yards to clean, trim and re-plant, ensuring that there is a reason for every flower and shrub.

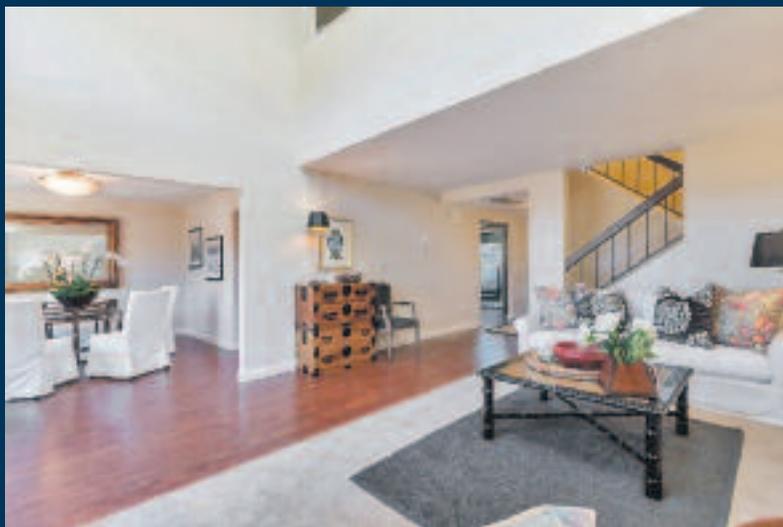
Even though juniper is drought and deer resistant, Reuter has moved away from planting it. Tam Juniper, a popular choice 30 or 40 years ago, can become “a rat’s nest” when it overtakes a yard, he says, while a line of Italian Cypress grows “obnoxious” over time. Michael Saputo knows just how juniper gets out of hand. His Orinda neighbors once nicknamed his place “the juniper house” because his aunt and uncle, who bought the house in 1953, blanketed their entire giant front yard with it.

“It was just awful,” he says. Saputo had it removed by a landscaper about six years ago, replacing it with a unique, drought-friendly design, with a flagstone entry, lighting and drip irrigation to carefully ration water. The irrigation system is being reworked with Mondo grass installed. “It’s a look that [water supplier EBMUD] likes,” Saputo says with pride. Although his plants are not in their prime during winter months he thinks his front yard is “the best landscaped yard in Sleepy Hollow.”

Realtors will tell you that landscaping is an integral part of the home-for-sale formula. “It usually looks best when it looks established and natural,” says Tom Stack of Orinda’s Coldwell Banker office. “Does the paint merge with the landscaping? Does the home sit well on its lot?” he asks.

... continued on page D4

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## Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	4	\$797,000	\$1,699,000
MORAGA	3	\$748,000	\$995,000
ORINDA	12	\$699,000	\$1,537,000

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

2 Green Acres Court, \$1,150,000, 4 Bdrms, 2085 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 1-2-15  
 389 Hermosa Court, \$1,699,000, 3 Bdrms, 1294 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 12-30-14;  
 Previous Sale: \$710,000, 07-17-13  
 1114 Laurel Drive, \$1,520,000, 3 Bdrms, 2262 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 1-7-15;  
 Previous Sale: \$750,000, 12-04-03  
 701 Wee Donegal, \$797,000, 3 Bdrms, 1876 SqFt, 1980 YrBlt, 12-29-14;  
 Previous Sale: \$225,000, 07-23-86

### MORAGA

911 Augusta Drive, \$850,000, 4 Bdrms, 2828 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 12-30-14;  
 Previous Sale: \$850,000, 02-05-10  
 1106 Larch Avenue, \$995,000, 4 Bdrms, 2403 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 1-5-15  
 238 Paseo Bernal, \$748,000, 3 Bdrms, 2044 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 12-30-14;  
 Previous Sale: \$575,000, 03-11-10

### ORINDA

2 Alder Walk, \$1,286,500, 12-24-14  
 6 Alder Walk, \$1,295,000, 1-5-15  
 74 Bates Boulevard, \$1,350,500, 3 Bdrms, 3021 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 1-7-15

**continued on page D13**



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6 Arbolado Ct, Orinda



Mediterranean Remodel • \$1,050,000

839 Ava Ct, Lafayette



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# Curb Appeal

... continued from page D1



A "before" front yard, and do-it-yourself project for Moraga's Lau family. Removing 40-year-old juniper takes work!  
Photo Ted Lau

"At a minimum, weed, plant [and] invigorate the garden," he says, and arrange "pots with flowers on the porch. Perhaps [add] some bark in the planting area to give it a uniform color." Stack's chore list also includes pruning trees and removing dead limbs. He says the path to the door should be clear.

There's an added safety benefit to decluttering vegetation out front. "Front door visibility and exposure minimizes risk of front door intrusion from burglars," says Moraga Chief of Police Robert Priebe. "Anything providing cover from passersby on the street helps anyone trying to get in your home via the front door."

"I tell my sellers you only have one chance to make a first impression," emphasizes Diane Reilly of Alain Pinel Realtors. "I can't tell you how many times I've pulled up to a home that meets all the buyer needs but when they see an unattractive or cluttered front yard they say, 'We don't need to go inside this one.'" Reilly explains that most yard work can be accomplished with more elbow grease than cash. "Keep grass cut, edges trimmed and trees pruned. Remove old woody shrubs like junipers.

Plant colorful seasonal plants – all one vibrant color clustered in a spot that will draw the eye to the front door. Use dark bark to fill in unplanted spaces," she says.

Reilly suggests painting home exteriors every seven or eight years. "If not the whole house, at least paint the trim and the front door," she says, adding that a fresh coat of paint in a neutral color is money well spent. The home should look "crisp, clean and uncluttered," Reilly says. "Even if a homeowner is not selling, these affordable improvements can be done over time to make the home one of the nicest on the block."

Cindy Glover of Moraga understands the time commitment for her do-it-yourself yard project. Glover spent two years discussing the look she wanted for her former front yard. The original landscaping was "lawn and path-oriented" with a "cookie-cutter" look.

The first piece she tackled was the pathway and its surrounding hardscape; it would become "the bones" of the project. Glover envisioned a wide path leading straight to her front door with a low, curved "eyebrow" wall and a built-in mailbox of stone to match the stone on the house. Spots for manzanita and maple trees were reserved. The remaining spaces were filled in mostly with drought resistant flowers and grasses, ensuring that "any mistakes made were small." A new roof with a mix of colors and bright metal trim was installed, and a new front door completed the look Glover calls "timeless."

Roger and Patti Witalice's 1950s Orinda home had changed hands once or twice before they bought it in 1979, but the view from the street was the same, consisting of "a flat porch, hidden doorway and concrete walkway," says Patti Witalice. "There were three huge pine trees, a briar bush of pyracantha and wild roses," while the front door was "smashed into a corner." They hired a landscaper in 2006. The new look focuses on the front door, with a curved walkway, an earthen berm to shield the street view and a mix of plant color and textures. The New Zealand flax plantings create "a visual barrier" with a "comforting sense of privacy." The round window in the gate echoes the Sleepy Hollow practice of a round window on the front of the house, she says.

In short, curb appeal means keeping things fresh, simple and clean. After all, the goal is "to show off the home," Stack says.

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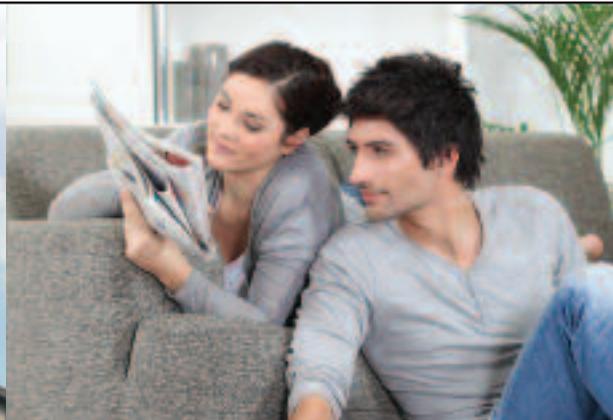
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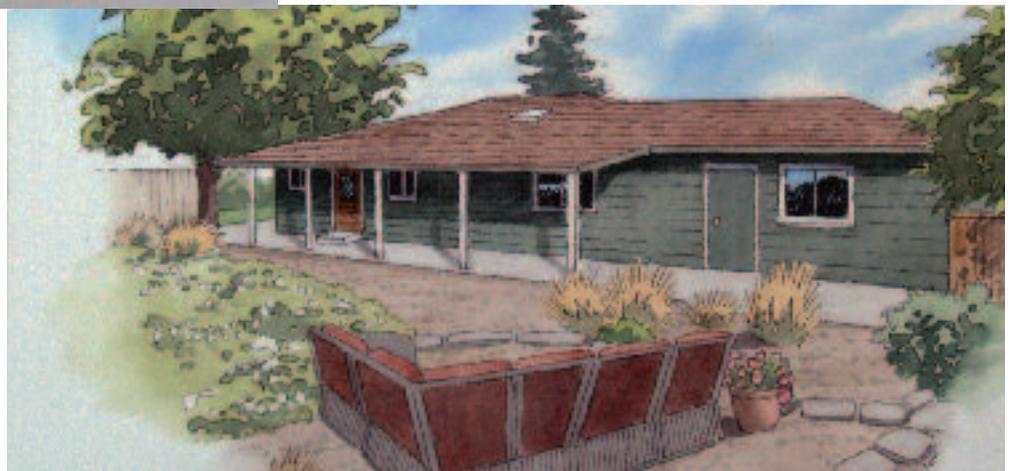
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# Chinese New Year and Feng Shui

By Michele Duffy



*A tidy entrance with an activated red door allows for Chinese New Year's prosperity to flourish at this Moraga home. Photos provided*

More people are celebrating Chinese New Year, which began Feb. 19, than ever before. This is the year of the Female Wood Sheep/Ram, which will help to usher in a peaceful, calm, artistic, creative and kind energy. Attention to feng shui is the best way to prepare your home for the blessings of this year.

First, clean your home thoroughly and completely. Move any piece of furniture that has not been moved during the year to clean behind and all around. This first step is the most important of all preparations. It is most auspicious to start a new year and a new cycle in anything but a messy or dirty home environment. Remove any items you no longer use. Clear out all closets, drawers and storage areas if they have clutter. Focus on organization and tidiness. ... continued on page D10

## Feng Shui Basics

<b>WEALTH &amp; PROSPERITY</b> "Gratitude"  REAR LEFT  <u>Wood</u> Blues, purple & reds	<b>FAME &amp; REPUTATION</b>  "Integrity"  REAR MIDDLE <u>Fire</u> Reds	<b>LOVE &amp; MARRIAGE</b> "Receptivity"  REAR RIGHT  <u>Earth</u> Reds, pinks, & whites
<b>HEALTH &amp; FAMILY</b> "Strength"  MIDDLE LEFT  <u>Wood</u> Blues & Greens	<b>CENTER</b>  <u>"Earth"</u>  Yellow & earth tones	<b>CREATIVITY &amp; CHILDREN</b> "Joy"  MIDDLE RIGHT  <u>Metal</u> White & Pastels
<b>KNOWLEDGE &amp; SELF CULTIVATION</b> "Stillness"  FRONT LEFT  <u>Earth</u> Black, blues & greens	<b>CAREER</b> "Depth"  FRONT MIDDLE  <u>Water</u> Black & dark tones	<b>HELPFUL PEOPLE &amp; TRAVEL</b> "Synchronicity"  FRONT RIGHT  <u>Metal</u> White, grey & black

"Front Door"

Feng shui (or Wind and Water) is the practice of arranging your environment so that energy or "Qi" flows gently and smoothly through your home or business. The principles of feng shui are founded on traditional Chinese medicine, which is based on the dynamic opposites of yin and yang, together with the five elements (water, wood, fire, earth and metal) as well as form, landscape, space orientation and time. Feng shui is about creating a natural equilibrium, while promoting health, harmony, stability and prosperity. Feng shui is not a meditation practice, a religion or a New Age cult. In fact, its origins are thousands of years old. Feng shui is based on the concept that everything in your environment has a life force or energy called "Qi." Just as Qi flows through your body, Qi also flows your through living environment. When the energy flow is stagnant, stuck, obstructed or moves too quickly, unbalanced Qi may lead to ill health, domestic strife or financial concerns. Professional feng shui advice, adjustments and blessings help create nurturing energy in the spaces and places we spend the most time – our homes and offices. The goal are sustainable good luck, good health, harmonious relationships and prosperity.



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Included are sloped wood and wood beamed ceilings, random plank hardwood floors, fireplace in living room, formal dining room, updated kitchen with stainless appliances including Dacor gas cook-top, large adjoining family room, walls of glass in all living areas, updated baths, separate laundry room, master with large walk-in closet.

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# Chinese New Year and Feng Shui

... continued from page D8

Spruce up your front entrance with lively plants, paint the door red to activate this powerful area of your home and rid this area of clutter, too. Also, make sure you throw away broken furniture or china, and repair what needs repairing around your home and yard.

Next, fill your home with an abundance of fresh fruit and flowers. It is a special time of year, so treat it like a special occasion.

A large bowl of oranges placed prominently in the kitchen welcomes wealth blessings into our homes. A home that has an abundance of healthy whole foods attracts more nourishment and abundance for all who live there. Since 2015 is the Wood Ram year, plants carry an especially lucky energy. As we activate wood, we activate the new year with prosperity and abundance. Many flock to markets to prepare gifts and decorate the house with traditional "lucky plants," such as:

- Orange trees
- Mandarin or kumquat trees
- Lucky bamboo
- Money trees
- Branches of cherry blossoms
- Stalks of pussy willow



*Oranges properly displayed in a Moraga kitchen*

Consider painting a room. The Self-Knowledge, Contemplation and Wisdom area (the near left area from the front entrance) is a great room to paint to welcome the more reflective Sheep/Ram energy. Use shades of blue or pair with bluish green to create an environment for contemplative growth. Add the imagery of mountains, which symbolize knowledge, to activate this area for greater success in 2015.

Last year was the Horse's year to gallop and take off. The 2015 Sheep/Ram year will be one of contemplation and appreciation of what has already been accomplished. Think about bringing goodness to others. Take a deep breath and calmly look at what's ahead. Focus on the mantra of forging a steady path, of healing, generosity, nurturing relationships and keeping the peace.

Wishing you much health, prosperity and success for the Year of the Female Wood Sheep/Ram.



*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, and spending time with her family; Canyon Ranch Feng Shui Master, International Feng Shui Guild (IFSG) Red Ribbon Professional. To schedule your own feng shui consultation, call (520) 647-4887 or send an email to [spaceharmony@gmail.com](mailto:spaceharmony@gmail.com). For more info visit [www.mandalafengshui.com](http://www.mandalafengshui.com).*



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Leslie Kalish, LMK Interiors

SATURDAY, MARCH 14<sup>TH</sup>  
Stephen Elbert, Elbert Associates  
Lynda Catlin, Catlin Design, Interior Designer

SATURDAY, MAY 16<sup>TH</sup>  
William & Melissa Thorn, Thorn Architects  
Bob Cleaver, Landscape Architect

SATURDAY, MAY 23<sup>RD</sup>  
Stephen Elbert, Elbert Associates  
Ken Hansen, Landscape Architect  
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## Digging Deep - Gardening with Cynthia Brian

# Why We Garden, Part 2

*"In the depth of winter I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer."* ~ Albert Camus

After zero precipitation in January, we reveled in the rains of early February. Soon thereafter, the sun shone brightly again and spring appears to be arriving a month early. My flowering peach, plum, and pear trees have all completed their burst of color and my landscape is alive with blooming daffodils, tulips, iris, freesia, magnolia stellata and periwinkle. Somehow we've managed to skip the normal dreariness of February and jump right into Camus' invincible summer. A reader in Norway was shocked to read that bergenia blooms here in California in January while it doesn't show its pretty petals in Northern Europe until May. Which brings me to more reasons why I love to garden ...

### Surprises

As gardeners we know that we are not in charge. No matter how much we attempt to control the outside forces, Mother Nature rules. We can no longer say that daffodils bloom in March or gladioli in summer. Our climate is changing, and we are constantly surprised at what pops up – and when. Gardeners are stewards of the earth and we must adapt to her unpredictability.

### Love

Gardens evoke love. The birds and bees are making love and passion is in the garden air. How many of us chose a beautiful garden for our wedding nuptials or as the setting for birthdays, showers, graduations and other celebrations? Since I was a child, our family gatherings were always held in a garden, weather permitting. My husband and I, as well as all of my siblings, held our wedding receptions in the spectacular gardens of our ranch. My mother planted for months creating an artistic palette using the colors each of us had chosen for our special day. Now that is love!

### Responsibility

After several decades of marriage, whenever I am asked how to maintain a relationship, my advice has always been to become a gardener. It takes responsibility to be a gardener. We have to be attentive to the needs of each individual specimen. We need to know when to water, when to prune, when to fertilize, when to transplant. This is responsibility. If you want to grow a relationship, start with a plant. For first timers, I recommend a spider plant. They don't demand much, and they prosper with neglect. Or, if you prefer a colorful connection, orchids are not fussy prima donnas, yet they are radiantly beautiful.

... continued on page D13



*Fragrant Daphne adds color to the shade garden.*

*Photos Cynthia Brian*

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*Orchids are beautiful and easy to grow.*

### Patience

A tomato can't be rushed. Nor can a carrot, or a rose, or a petunia. We could stand on top of the vine all day long shouting, prodding, encouraging, but our efforts will not yield a faster growth. Every plant is going to grow in the time it takes to do so. Patience is the keystone of a gardener's life. Gardening is an especially good way to teach children the value of patience. For every time, every season, there is a purpose and it is worth waiting for.

### Spontaneity

Seeds fly through the air and grow where they fall. Vegetables, weeds and flowers are bedmates. No matter how carefully we curate our creations, the birds, bees, butterflies and wildlife always have something else in store for us. Just today I found holly growing under my camellia tree. I didn't put it there, and it will need to be transplanted, but I was so excited I kicked up my heels and wanted to fly a kite!

### Curiosity

The garden is a world of wonder and exploration. Discovering the tiny salamander or croaking frog by the pond, or the odd color in the parsnip is exciting. Get down on your knees to investigate the insects or take a closer look at the stamen in the calla lily. Stick your nose in a Daphne bloom and inhale the perfume. Be curious. There is so much to learn.

... continued on page D14

## Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

...continued from Page D2

### ORINDA ... continued

- 51 Hazel Tree Ridge, \$1,046,000, 12-29-14
- 65 Hillcrest Drive, \$1,580,000, 3 Bdrms, 1760 SqFt, 1950 YrBlT, 1-6-15;  
Previous Sale: \$740,000, 07-19-13
- 54 La Campana Road, \$985,000, 3 Bdrms, 1531 SqFt, 1938 YrBlT, 12-31-14;  
Previous Sale: \$915,000, 09-06-02
- 14 Las Palomas, \$1,500,000, 5 Bdrms, 2831 SqFt, 1956 YrBlT, 1-6-15;  
Previous Sale: \$1,350,000, 08-01-12
- 87 Loma Vista Drive, \$699,000, 3 Bdrms, 1715 SqFt, 1928 YrBlT, 12-24-14;  
Previous Sale: \$675,000, 03-15-00
- 253 Manzanita Drive, \$1,450,000, 4 Bdrms, 2591 SqFt, 1952 YrBlT, 12-30-14;  
Previous Sale: \$1,352,500, 05-25-07
- 84 Tarry Lane, \$1,300,000, 3 Bdrms, 1782 SqFt, 1963 YrBlT, 12-30-14;  
Previous Sale: \$161,500, 04-21-78
- Quince Terrace, \$1,447,000, 12-24-14
- 12 Wild Plun Way, \$1,537,000, 1-2-15

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## Digging Deep - Gardening with Cynthia Brian

# Why We Garden, Part 2

... continued from page D13

### Spirituality

We don't have to be religious to be spiritual. The greatest cathedral in the world cannot match the temple of Mother Nature. I am forever in awe and wonder at the miracle of our natural world. When I am in the garden I feel as one with all living creatures. I understand that we are all connected – the rocks, the water, the plants, the sky, the animals. We are all living, breathing, magical creations united in a giant prayer of glory.

### Mistakes

Perhaps one of the most important lessons from the garden is that there are no mistakes. Failure is fertilizer. We heap our failures on the compost pile to grow a new garden. Gardens give us permission to be human, to make mistakes and to grow stronger and smarter from our errors. Life is never quiet or dull, and everything is a blessing and a lesson in the garden.

May you discover love in the garden and appreciate the spontaneity and generosity that nature offers.

Happy gardening, happy growing.

## Cynthia Brian's Mid-Month Reminders

- **PURCHASE** summer bulbs of your choice, but don't be tempted to plant until the ground warms.
- **AERATE** lawns while the ground is wet to allow for moisture to sink to the roots.
- **FERTILIZE** citrus (specifically our beloved Meyer lemons) by the end of the month.
- **PLANT** bare root roses and bare root fruit trees through the end of February. Many are now on sale so make sure to check the plant carefully for damage or dryness before purchasing. Prune back any damaged or dry roots. Soak in water for at least a day before planting.
- **SHARPEN** tools in preparation for spring.
- **CONTINUE** to pick up or rake fallen camellia blooms to keep your bush healthy.



A bed of Italian kale.

Cynthia Brian in the February vegetable garden.



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### Utility Right-of Way

Pruning for utility line clearance does not always follow desirable pruning techniques in regards to appearance and health of the tree. In this situation, the needs of the utility right-of-way take priority over the tree.

When you have a tree under a power line that requires frequent reduction by the utility co. it's important to have proper pruning before, or have the tree removed, and plant a tree with the criteria (i.e. size and placement) that should be determined by an arborist, so that a tree's health and appearance will never be compromised by the need for utility pruning. So don't wait until it's too late, call your local ISA Arborist at Advance Tree Service and Landscaping to help you determine your choice for the perfect tree.

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# Gardening for Bees

*Easy ways to make your garden a honeybee haven*

By Janet Kaidantzis



*A honeybee heads for a mustard flower. Photo Andy Scheck*

With the warmer winter weather, spring is in the air. And so are the honeybees – out flying, gathering pollen, nectar and water to bring back to the hive. Warmer weather also brings us out to our gardens. As you look around and make plans for the sunny days ahead, do a few simple things to help the honeybee. She will reward your efforts by pollinating the flowers to make your fruit trees and vegetable gardens more abundant. And her honey will surely find its way to your local farmers' market and onto your table.

If you have a sunny spot in your yard, plant lavender or rosemary. These attractive shrubs are easy to grow, drought tolerant and long blooming. If you have part shade, plant spearmint, hummingbird sage, campanula or bee balm. Other bee friendly plants that flourish in our region are ceanothus, wisteria, asters, sunflowers, borage, many salvias and thyme.

Honeybees practice “flower fidelity,” foraging on one plant species at a time. Where possible, grow a single type of plant in a patch of at least one square meter. You'll be reducing the distance the honeybee must fly from flower to flower letting her work more efficiently.

Here's another simple thing you can do right now, as soon as you put down this paper. Place an old dinner plate or pie tin beneath one of your drip lines or sprinkler heads so it will refill regularly. Honeybees need a reliable source of clean water all year long. They will remember and return to your improvised water feeder every day, just like a bird, so keep it in the same place and keep it flowing. Place a mound of pebbles on the plate so the bees can take a sip of water without falling in.

It has been a tough year on honeybees. Colony

losses among my beekeeping friends exceeded 50 percent. There are many reasons for honeybee mortality; chemical poisonings are one factor. Please avoid using herbicides and pesticides. Instead, trap the yellow jackets (they attack honeybees, too). Use ladybugs to go after aphids. Dump standing water to prevent mosquitoes. If you must spray for pests, choose a product that is non-lethal to honeybees. At the very least, spray at dusk when the honeybee has returned to her hive.

Mother Nature does her part to help the honeybee.

Outside your garden walls, the rains bring up the mustard that blooms across our open hillsides providing good forage for bees. More wildflowers will follow. The honeybee knows no boundaries and will fly to wherever nutritious flowers bloom. With very little effort, you can invite her into your garden helping both your plants and the honeybees to thrive.

Meanwhile, pray for rain. How easy is that?

*Janet Kaidantzis is a backyard beekeeper in Lafayette and a member of the Mt. Diablo Beekeepers Association.*

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## LAFAYETTE



### 963 Hawthorne Drive

Timeless craftsman 4bd/2ba home with remodeled kitchen, beautiful hardwood floors, office, private yard with deck, outdoor fireplace, large grassy area, play house. Walk to K-12 schools.

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## LAFAYETTE



### 3336 Springhill Road

Expanded in 2004 including kitchen & baths. 3000+ square foot home, .6 acres – private creek side location. Large lawn and great outdoor living, minutes from schools.

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### 23 Sessions Road

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