

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 09 Issue 1 Wednesday, March 11, 2015



Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for March ...read on page D12

Orinda's Old Yellow House

Everything old is new

By Cathy Dausman



The Old Yellow House, now fully restored

Photo Cathy Dausman

A walk through James Wright's now fully restored Old Yellow House is like taking a walk through history. In the past three years, the architect has transformed his 1890 two-story house into 2,050 feet of what he calls "the most comfortable building" that he has ever worked in or lived.

Currently, he's doing both. Wright estimates he sank an additional \$500,000 into remodeling, renovations and upgrades; that figure doesn't include the estimated two-and-a-half years of full-time labor he dedicated to the project.

As seen from the street, the Old Yellow House is a modest affair, restored to its original golden yellow exterior paint. Original windowpanes are still in place, but a closer look reveals awning and rooftop solar panels, and hints at technology backing the remodel. Interior and exterior materials were meticulously preserved, restored or recycled.

With the exception of computers and necessary code upgrades, very little in the house is new, thanks to what Wright calls his dedication to "thrif, salvage and second-hand stores." The man is a huge fan of Habitat

for Humanity's ReStore and Urban Ore Inc. Street-side entry includes dual front doors, which Wright explains were part of the caste system of the time. Laborers used the right side door, white-collar workers the left. Both lower and main levels can be accessed by ramps.

The main floor consists of three rooms – a parlor housing an upright piano and Victrola, a bedroom and a kitchen. The kitchen was enlarged to accommodate a conference table, and Wright added a main floor bathroom to the rear of the house.

History surrounds those climbing the staircase to the second floor – Wright papered the walls with 1930s- and 1940s-era newspapers reclaimed from the house. The years surrounding World War II come alive as you climb the wooden treads to the upper level, which holds four furnished bedrooms and a full bath tucked under the roofline.

"Roofline" is the operative word on the second floor. Wright has left the 8-foot-9-inch ceiling beams fully exposed, and the view extends to the rafters. The skylights admit enough natural light that indoor photography is possible without a flash.

Wright loves gazing up at the view from his bed late at night when the moon is out. "It feels as if I'm in a spaceship," he confides. Much of the interior wood is reclaimed old-growth redwood and Douglas fir. Wall studs align perfectly with each roof rafter – a style Wright calls "optimized framing." The roof and walls are lined with radiant barrier plywood foil, and the west-facing roof holds a series of ventilated, photovoltaic thermal skylights.

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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	8	\$650,000	\$2,575,000
MORAGA	8	\$355,000	\$1,200,000
ORINDA	5	\$785,000	\$1,640,000

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 Cal REsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

LAFAYETTE

- 3234 Del Mar Drive, \$870,000, 3 Bdrms, 1687 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 1-9-15
 462 Florence Drive, \$805,000, 3 Bdrms, 1097 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 1-29-15
 663 Glenside Drive, \$2,575,000, 5 Bdrms, 3541 SqFt, 2012 YrBlt, 1-15-15;
 Previous Sale: \$2,436,500, 07-02-13
 1551 Huston Road, \$650,000, 3 Bdrms, 1436 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 1-14-15;
 Previous Sale: \$525,000, 10-04-13
 892 Las Trampas Road, \$910,000, 2 Bdrms, 1458 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 1-23-15
 1580 Rancho Del #HAMBRE, \$1,805,000, 4 Bdrms, 3111 SqFt, 1995 YrBlt, 1-13-15;
 Previous Sale: \$1,575,000, 06-10-04
 1608 Springbrook Road, \$1,050,000, 3 Bdrms, 1846 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 1-15-15;
 Previous Sale: \$795,000, 02-15-07
 3258 Surmont Drive, \$1,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 3126 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 1-21-15;
 Previous Sale: \$301,000, 05-21-86

MORAGA

- 39 Arroyo Drive, \$1,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 2437 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 1-12-15;
 Previous Sale: \$233,000, 01-04-84
 895 Augusta Drive, \$600,000, 2 Bdrms, 1985 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 1-30-15

continued on page D13

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Orinda's Old Yellow House

... continued from page D1



James Wright explains the solar heating system from the attic.

Photos Cathy Dausman

Hinged dual pane interior windows hung behind the original windows conserve heat loss and minimize street sounds, as do the double thick front doors. Wright hadn't used his solar-based central heating for a month, but when he does, he says it costs him only as much as using a 75-watt light bulb. Cooling, on the other hand, costs the equivalent of using a 100-watt light bulb!

Since Wright both lives and works in the Old Yellow House, he has made the lower level a clean and green paean to technology. It starts at the entry – accessed through the “trade” door, street level. The heat exchange ductwork has been left intentionally exposed, imparting a high-tech vibe to the area. Outside light

floods down the glass and metal spiral staircase. A modern kitchen with glass fronted cabinets, chrome sink, cook island, dishwasher and mirrored, oversized refrigerator act as counterpoint to the simple main floor kitchen-cum-conference room with its lower, free-standing sink, built-in tile alcove and Hoosier cabinet.

The original freshwater well has been built up to table height and sports a round glass tabletop. Sturdy glass panels inlaid in the stone floor showcase a radiant heating system. The remaining floor is Brazilian walnut. Subflooring is R-30 rigid foam. A sliding door provides access and a view from the sitting area to the backyard.

A laundry room and full bath are tucked away on the lower level south side. Portions of the below-grade wall are encased in glass both for show and practicality. “I wanted to express the original stone foundation walls in the basement, and of course they leaked groundwater,” Wright explains. “This inspired a permeable concrete subdrain and ventilation system that I call Geo ventilation.”

Wright will welcome the public to his home March 19 with a lecture and open house (details at <https://www.facebook.com/NetZeroHomes>); proceeds will benefit local historical societies. He says the Old Yellow House blends “natural and green energy of the future coupled with (respect for) the past.”

But it's time to pay the bills, Wright says, and “I have to go back to work.”



Looking down from above on a second story bedroom. No ceilings!



The parlor features an upright piano and Victrola.

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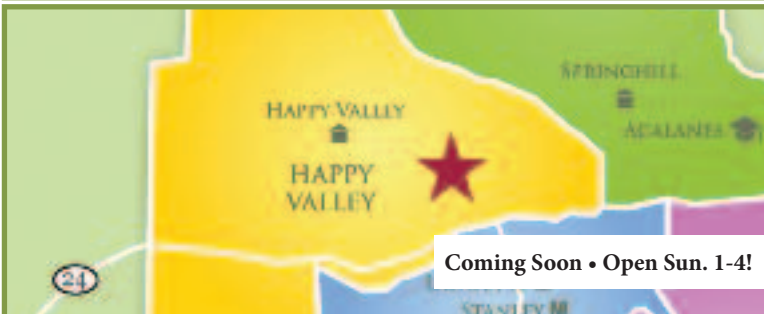
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Stylish Solutions

Decorating with Green

By Ann McDonald

I love the color green. As springtime awakens, industrious flowers, lit by the warmth of the sun, soften our world. This month, as our excitement for impending spring sprouts, I wanted to share three unexpected places where you, the stylish suburbanite, can successfully use the color green.

Trust me when I say that while I love green in all shades, memories of bad avocado shag carpet occasionally loom in my mind, so I am cautious with tone and saturation – two important things to consider when using the color. One wrong undertone and you have moved from something beautiful to something reminiscent of, say, murky pea soup. Saturation issues make colors read flat and chalky – and not in the cool, hip matte sense of the word.

Many times when we complete a client project, we will share simple collage photos with color combinations so stylish suburbanites like you can choose accessory items throughout the year that work within their larger color scheme. For this month's article, I am sharing photos in that format so you can have a hands-on application.

One of my favorite apps is PicMonkey (www.picmonkey.com). We use it constantly to create gorgeous collages. They have a free version for the casual enthusiast. The app is especially fun to play with and useful if your eye is not naturally geared to putting color combinations together, such as green with purple. You can simply pull pictures and collage them to see if they work and then head out to shop.

Here are three of my unexpected uses for green:

1) At the party. We've all seen those gorgeous, simple white and cream tablescapes with single colored candles and décor. I love them. But every now and then you need some all-out joy. This past year we hosted an event for over 50 ladies and had a field day with the color green. From the linens to the vases, which served as the unusual "goodie bag," the color was a hit.

We married green in all shades – and I do mean all. I broke every proverbial rule with respect to color combinations, watching out, however, for bad undertones (the root of the color). It was fabulous, layered and rich. Purple and blue were our accent colors in the straws, ribbons, dishes and even the floral arrangements.

For your next luncheon or spring party, consider using green as your anchor. It doesn't have to be childish or silly. (You're not trying to create a Barney party.) Stick with strong, simple elements and layer for effect. We used simple glass buffet plates in square shapes and accented with smaller salad bowls in green blown glass.

And, of course, don't forget to match your purse.

2) In the kitchen or family room. Can you imagine a green piano? Well, we have one from a very long time ago, adorned with green and yellow accents in my kitchen. For springtime accents on the black built-in shelves, I will often switch the accessories to things like bright yellow lemons and reverse-painted kelly green glassware. It adds the perfect pop with a bit of whimsy.

Feel free to go bold. Switch out seasonal accessories or find unique antique lamps that make a statement. You don't always have to paint over antiques to mix them into modern color schemes. Take risks, have fun.

3) Laundry rooms. One of the places that could use a cheery color is the utility room where we spend so much of our time. The combination of kelly green and blue fosters a good working vibe and provides a soothing palate. I like a peaceful atmosphere when faced with things like laundry, mending and folding.

You can use greens and blues in combination with any color washing machines. Include an offbeat piece of furniture as a laundry basket, like a Barclay Butera piece, which is more stationary than movable but is a great touch for small visible laundry areas. The nice part? When the kids head off to college, they can take it with them and use it for a side table, storage or to remind them that when it's full, it's time to do laundry!

Whatever your opinion of green, try to incorporate differing shades of the color into your décor. It's beautiful, adds stability and has a prosperous feel.

Blessings this March, stylish suburbanite. Let me know how your PicMonkey adventures go, and if you love the app as much as my team and I do.



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.



Green is known for indicating balance, growth, stability, abundance and peace – all things we want to bring into client homes and spaces. Photos courtesy Couture Chateau llc, photography by Couture Chateau LLC



This antique Italian Tole lamp has gone to live with a client in Florida, but is was incredible. I share this so you are free to go bold.



This Barclay Butera piece is more stationary than movable, but for small visible laundry areas, it's a great touch.

Karen Murphy

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Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for March

By Cynthia Brian

"Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land." ~ Aldo Leopold



Yellow oxalis is also known as shamrock, perfect for St. Patrick's Day.

Photos Cynthia Brian

Sunshine and patchy clouds. Mostly sunny and very warm. Cloudy with rain possible. If you are like me, you are checking the online weather channels to determine when our gardens will be getting a shower. Unfortunately the weather predictions are not accurate. The conversations around the water cooler as well as at the dinner table revolve more and more about the weather than anything else. While we see stories on the news of "the worst winter in Boston," California is facing the driest three-year period in California history, stretching back to the Gold Rush in 1850.

Farmers throughout California indicate their livelihoods are at stake, with their needed water levels cut by nearly 25 percent. Snowfall in the Sierras is at dismal levels. Beyond California, the world is suffering from global droughts affecting over 2 billion people. Public awareness of the importance of conservation is an issue that can't be watered down.

With spring just a few days away, and our weather totally incomprehensible, gardeners need to be vigilante and diligent when it comes to the needs of our landscape. You can conserve water while protecting the environment and your pocketbook by following a few of this month's tips:

- **COMPOST** your scraps, leaves, grass clippings, newspaper, eggshells, coffee grounds, tea leaves and other organic materials. Keep your pile or bin wet, turn often, and be ready to reap rich matter to add to your garden.
- **MULCH**, mulch, mulch. I know I sound like a broken record, but by providing that extra three or four inches of top dressing in your garden, you are protecting your plants from heat, frost, and other weather conditions, conserving water, adding to the texture and absorption of the soil, and keeping erosion at bay.
- **GROW** your own fruits, vegetables and herbs. You know what you put into your soil. You reap the nutritional benefits. You have control over water, fertilizer and attraction of beneficial insects. Thyme, sage, oregano and rosemary are all easy to grow in the ground or in pots adding perennial goodness to savory dishes.

- **START** seedlings in half an orange or grapefruit after pulp has been removed. Put a hole in the bottom and when the seedling is large enough, plant the entire rind in the garden.
- **INCREASE** magnesium and sulfate in your garden by sprinkling Epson Salt around plantings.
- **RID** walkways and paths of weeds with a homemade brew of weed killer. Mix one gallon of white vinegar with one cup of table salt and one tablespoon of Dawn liquid dish soap. Use as a spray when the sun is shining. Do not use around lawns or flowerbeds.
- **CUT** the neck off a large soda bottle and place over small pots planted with seeds to act as a mini greenhouse, eliminating the need for watering.
- **CLEAN** bird feeders and birdbaths with a solution of soap, water and bleach. Allow thorough drying before refilling to ward off avian diseases.

... continued on page D14



A rustic arrangement of daffodils, succulents, calla lilies and twigs.



Does any flower top tulips for signaling spring?

Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

...continued from Page D2

MORAGA

- 8 Corliss Drive, \$975,000, 3 Bdrms, 1534 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 1-29-15;
Previous Sale: \$365,000, 10-28-94
- 2145 Donald Drive #6, \$355,000, 2 Bdrms, 1190 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 1-28-15;
Previous Sale: \$360,000, 08-03-04
- 121 Draeger Drive, \$1,050,000, 4 Bdrms, 2343 SqFt, 1983 YrBlt, 1-16-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,050,000, 01-16-15
- 82 Miramonte Drive, \$630,000, 2 Bdrms, 1798 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 1-9-15;
Previous Sale: \$545,000, 09-25-08
- 267 Paseo Bernal #57, \$735,000, 3 Bdrms, 2018 SqFt, 1980 YrBlt, 1-20-15;
Previous Sale: \$195,000, 07-10-85
- 344 Tharp Drive, \$1,010,000, 4 Bdrms, 2377 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 1-29-15

ORINDA

- 34 Broadview Terrace, \$1,300,000, 3 Bdrms, 1765 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 1-16-15;
Previous Sale: \$850,000, 08-01-12
- 59 Hazel Tree Ridge, \$1,038,000, 1-23-15
- 204 Moraga Way, \$785,000, 4 Bdrms, 2584 SqFt, 1945 YrBlt, 1-21-15;
Previous Sale: \$259,500, 04-14-95
- 17 Rheem Boulevard, \$946,000, 2 Bdrms, 1408 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 1-27-15;
Previous Sale: \$520,000, 11-26-13
- 58 St. Stephens Drive, \$1,640,000, 5 Bdrms, 3126 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 1-28-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,299,000, 11-09-00

SK
Sheryl
Kortright

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Should you remodel before selling your home?

2015 Cost vs. Value Remodeling

		Project Cost	Resale Value	Cost Recouped
Bathroom Addition	MidRange	\$52,643	\$53,265	101%
	UpScale	91,164	89,057	98%
Kitchen Remodel	Midrange	69,359	75,493	109%
	Upscale	134,874	120,563	89%
Window Replacement	Midrange	12867	13640	106%
	Upscale	16406	18624	113%
Roofing Replacement	Midrange	25967	29710	114%
	Upscale	51123	49,290	96%
Garage Door Replacement		1942	3067	158%
		3298	5150	156%

To obtain a full report of Cost vs. Value for a wide range of projects, please contact us. We can advise you on which projects will get you the greatest return on your investment.

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1207 Woodborough Road, Lafayette

(Near Acalanes High and Springhill Elementary)



5Br/3Ba, 2,934sq ft exquisite custom handcrafted home with massive repurposed beams, 13' ceilings and an open plan "Great Room" with kitchen/living/dining areas that flow out to the new 1,900 sq ft wrap-around deck. Lot is 18,655 sq ft. The kids can walk or bike the trail to both schools!

\$1,295,000. See details and pics at realtyadvocates.com/1207wood

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Brett Weinstein, Broker
510.867-9883
brett@realtyadvocates.com

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for March

... continued from page D12

- **ALLOW** moles to live in your landscape as garden helpers who eat snail larvae, grubs and harmful insects while they aerate the dirt.
- **DIG** out dandelions with the root attached. Use the leaves and flowers in salads and tea. Roast the root with a few drops of olive oil. Dandelion is a detoxifier, helping our liver and digestive system.
- **FERTILIZE** lawns before or during a rain to increase root production, eliminate weeds, and add an emerald luster to your grass. If rainfall is not in the forecast, you will need to turn on your sprinklers. Choose a cool day to feed, water deeply, then infrequently thereafter.
- **SPRUCE** up the patio furniture before spring has sprung. Use the weekend to get your lounge chairs ready for relaxation and outdoor fun.
- **INSPECT** irrigation pipes and sprinkler systems for leaks. A small drip can equal a loss of 50 gallons a month while a steady drip could equate to more than 2,500 gallons of wasted water.
- **REPLACE** washers in hoses as they deteriorate over time. If you are still getting a spray from the faucet connection, replace the coupling.
- **REPAIR** and sharpen gardening tools, including lawn mowers, shredders and shears.
- **PLANT** gaillardia, the National Garden Bureau plant of 2015. The majority of the 23 species are perennial. The common name is "blanket flower," named after a talented Native American weaver whose grave was "blanketed" with colorful flowers mimicking the intricate blankets she wove.
- **IMPROVE** air quality with sansevieria, commonly called snake plant, and also known as mother-in-law's tongue. Snake plant is one of the best pollution filtering plants. It grows in low light and loves humidity.
- **USHER** in spring with an attractive arrangement of calla lilies and a variety of daffodils scattered amidst yellow succulent blooms.
- **CELEBRATE** St. Patrick's Day with a container of oxalis, also known as shamrocks.
- **ENJOY** the blooms of camellias, azaleas, tulips, bearded iris, and numerous annuals this month as they exhibit their cavalcade of colors.
- **WELCOME** the equinox, a celebration of equal hours of day and night, by dancing, singing and frolicking in the ferns. (Okay, frolic where you wish!)

Wishing you the luck of the Irish and a harmonic vernal rebirth. Do your part to conserve our natural resources.

Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!



White camellias amongst the ferns are as showy as gardenias.



Sage is a great choice for a planter outside your kitchen.



Cynthia Brian loves the birds.



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SPRING IS IN THE AIR

Spring is here – it's time for spring cleaning but for your landscape! The trees and plants in the yard need to be inspected for water damage, remove dead or dying branches which may have been injured by disease/severe insect infestation or storm damage.

We also want to prune for improved plant appearance, tree and plant size to ensure all around health for your landscape.

So don't wait until it's too late, have a complete inspection by a Certified Arborist at Advance Tree Service and Landscaping to make your yard a summer STAYCATION.

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Ask Cynthia Brian – How Much Light

Reader's Request

Dear Cynthia:

As I sit here planning my spring edible garden, I'm wondering if all vegetables need lots of sunshine to bear fruit. I have sun and shade but probably not enough sunshine for everything I want to grow. Any suggestions?



Radishes do not need as much sunlight to produce great crops.

Photo Cynthia Brian

Dana, Orinda

Dear Dana:

This is a great question and one that every gardener grapples with during the planning stages. Here's my unscientific rule of thumb that seems to work well. When determining where to position a plant, ask yourself what part of the plant you will eventually eat.

If you are eating the fruit such as tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, cucumbers, zucchinis, beans, apples, corn, etc., you will want to plant these specimens in an area that receives a minimum of eight hours of bright sunlight. Root vegetables like carrots, beets, potatoes, and radishes can be planted in shadier areas or as understory plants because they don't need as much light as the plants that bear fruit on the branch. If what you eat is the leaf or stem such as Swiss chard, lettuce, kale, sorrel, arugula, spinach, you can plant in semi-shade with dappled sunlight. Any fruiting vegetable planted in shade can survive but usually bears smaller fruit because these plants need sunlight to create the energy to thrive.

Keep in mind, anything planted in shade will be less colorful, but you may enjoy a longer growing season and slower bolting. Experiment with your site and the answers will be obvious.

Happy Gardening to you!

Cynthia Brian

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The Goddess Gardener

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www.GoddessGardener.com

I am available as a speaker, designer, and consultant.

Cynthia will answer one or more questions every other issue as space allows. Email your comments or questions to

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New Listing

9 La Sombra Court Fantastic Opportunity in Orinda! This 3bd/2ba home sits on a flat .52ac lot w/ desirable cul-de-sac location, minutes to top K-12 schools & downtown. Needs a little TLC.

\$959,000

ORINDA



345 Camino Sobrante Updated 4bd/3ba, 3301sf contemporary on .55ac in primo country club loc. Spacious great rm, updated kitchen; hwd flrs; lower level guest apt w/private entrance; close to BART & Top Schools.

\$1,295,000

ORINDA



57 Davis Road Curb appeal +convenience come together in a great family/ executive couple home. Walk to town yet private/ peaceful setting. Ideal flr plan flow on 2 lvls, high ceilings, abundance of windows.

\$1,299,000

ORINDA



New Listing

588 Dalewood Drive Private Orinda Downs contemporary retreat. Apx. 3500sf 4bd/3.5ba +office & bonus rm, updated kitchen & baths, decks & views from all bedrooms, outdoor spa, flat grass. Top K-12 schools.

\$1,688,000

ORINDA



New Listing

23 Woodland Road Stylish traditional updated to perfection. Spectacular .5ac favorite street, all high quality detail, great floor plan, fab. kit/eating/fam rm. French doors to large yd w/cottage. Near 12yrs of schools.

\$1,795,000

ORINDA



New Listing

63 La Cuesta Lovingly maintained Spanish Colonial Estate with classic architectural detail, dramatic wood beam ceilings, French doors, brick patios and picturesque views.

\$1,985,000

ORINDA



New Listing

73 Scenic Drive Fabulous Glorietta 6486 sf spacious home tucked on a private .82 acre lot with a view. Complete with 5 bedrooms, 6 baths, 2 family rooms, level lawns, private decks, 3 car garage.

\$2,395,000

MORAGA



New Listing

4 Ketelsen Court

Tucked away on charming cul-de-sac on .36 acre of mature landscaping. 4bd/3ba with many updates. Panoramic views & outdoor spaces for the whole family. Walk to K-8 schools, swim club.

\$979,000

LAFAYETTE



New Listing

0 Pleasant Hill Road Spectacular .43 acre lot w/panoramic views of Mt. Diablo & city lights. Tranquil building site set back from road. Next to 1494 Pleasant Hill Rd. Formerly an almond orchard. Acalanes School district.

\$360,000

LAFAYETTE



New Listing

10 Rancho Diablo Upper Happy Valley opportunity at top of private road w/big views on .59 acre. Special home w/renovation possibilities in top neighborhood, convenient to commute & H.V. Elementary.

\$1,100,000

LAFAYETTE



New Listing

3399 Angelo Street Charming contemporary home in Reliez Valley w/pool, huge pool house, fruit trees, sunny yards. 2055sf single level 4bd/2ba home. Lafayette schools, good commute & BART.

\$1,189,000

LAFAYETTE



New Price

3336 Springhill Road

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

\$1,639,000

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

OAKLAND



New Listing

13714 Campus Drive Dramatic, light filled Ridgemont 4bd/3ba traditional, updated kit/fam combo, huge master suite, indoor-outdoor access w/flat grassy yard & spacious deck backing up to wooded open space.

\$1,149,000

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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