

# Through the Garden Gate'

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*This stone-edged infinity pool was installed in the sunniest backyard location of the Geary's Orinda home.*

*Photos Cathy Dausman*



*To one side of the pool the hillside slope was pushed back and is kept at bay by a waist-high retaining wall, allowing space for a built-in barbecue, just steps from the outdoor dining room in the Diraimondo's back yard.*

"I'm a realtor, so I see so many beautiful homes," Geary explained. This has allowed her to borrow successful landscaping ideas from other homes. She strove to incorporate a good indoor and outdoor flow between her house and its grounds. She also recycled a portion of one natural resource predominating her space: rocks! Pointing to a collection of landscape-sized boulders collected along the side yard, Geary said many have been repurposed as retaining walls and pathway pavers.

Originally built as a cattle ranch, the late 1940s home retains its modest hillside profile. The original flat roof was given a pitch, which lessens the topside collection of leaves and nut debris, and the Gearys installed an outdoor pizza oven in the side courtyard, which is tied together with a wisteria trellis. The largest change was removing an old black-bottomed pool from its shady front yard location and installing a stone-edged infinity pool in the sunniest backyard location. When swim time is done, guests can enjoy a game of bocce ball in the nearby shade.

The Gearys strove to incorporate a sense of how they might best use their space, taking into account their three teens. Their landscape plan should be 90 percent complete by the garden tour date, she promised.

**The Diraimondo Garden.** Feng shui is the term Mary Diraimondo most likes to describe the garden feel of the spaces surrounding her Lafayette home. It is intended to have an orderly, Japanese feel, while not being overt.



*This covered outdoor area with wood burning fireplace at the Rose home in Moraga offers a cozy space for entertaining.*



*Two ceramic geese tucked into a corner near the Rose house entry are by far the quietest wildlife on the lot.*

Four beautiful Japanese maples set the tone in the front yard, framing the house and bracketing a river of gravel flowing around to the side yard. "It was absolutely beautiful before, but we've done a total remodel," Diraimondo said of her outdoor space. "Something is always blooming."

The birds are delighted, as evidenced by their ever-present songs. In the last two to three years, guided by Shari Sullivan of Enchanting Planting, the owners have removed a lawn, extended the back yard, lowered fences, installed an outdoor kitchen, built retaining walls and a fire pit, restructured the wisteria arbor, and relocated a charming tea garden onto a hillside. Because the Diraimondo family loves golf, there is even a putting green of artificial turf that takes advantage of sweeping vistas to the northeast.

A hillside slope to one side of the pool was pushed back and is kept at bay by a waist-high retaining wall, allowing space for a built-in barbecue, just steps from the outdoor dining room. Views of Mt. Diablo have been carefully framed by growing vegetation; each bedroom has its own special outside space.

In addition to these three outdoor spaces, the self-guided 10th Moraga Juniors Garden Tour will showcase two additional gardens in the Lamorinda area from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, May 3. Guests can gather inspiration and ideas while supporting the Moraga Juniors' 2015 beneficiary, the Contra Costa Crisis Center. Cost is \$35 per ticket. For information, visit [moragajuniors.org](http://moragajuniors.org).