

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 09 Issue 14 Wednesday, September 9, 2015



On the Offense for Defensible Space

By Cathy Dausman



Tree limbs hanging over a roof is a no-no.

Photo Cathy Dausman

Four years into the latest California drought, wildland fires present a nearly year-round threat. The same vegetation that allows Lamorinda to call itself “semi-rural” is now bone dry.

What’s to stop a wildland fire from knocking at your door? Without preventative measures, the answer is very little.

With an ounce of prevention in mind, I volunteered my home exterior for inspection by the Moraga-Orinda Fire District. The assessment took an hour, cost nothing, and I learned a lot. Belated apologies to my neighbor, who panicked when three uniformed fire department personnel arrived unannounced (to him) at my house!

In the last year or two, MOFD fire marshal Kathy Leonard and two deputies, district aides Steven Woods

and Jessica Mislant, have completed more than 50 exterior home inspections. Leonard is quick to point out this is a voluntary program, an assessment, not an inspection. The purpose is to inform and educate, not cite or fine, she emphasized.

“We offer inspections all year long,” said Leonard, “but the ‘push’ is from February to [the weed abatement deadline] June 15.”

Before the trio reached the steps of our 45-year-old ranch house, they began their size-up, examining whether my landscape vegetation had a sufficient amount of space between plantings and the house itself.

Proper separation would prevent a brush fire from leapfrogging from grasses to bushes and into trees. I asked if one decorative tree needed its lower branches

trimmed, or limbed up. The tree was adequately set back from the house so Leonard said no, although she suggested I trim a few errant limbs reaching toward our roofline. My foundation landscape (camellias, azaleas and rhododendron) was encroaching on the house. Woods suggested I clear a one or two foot space between the plants and the house. He noted our double pane windows would protect against the radiant heat from an outside fire igniting anything inside, like curtains or furniture set close to the windows.

Next on the list: inspecting our old and battered wire mesh foundation vents. The vents allow foundation air circulation, but where air enters, so can hot embers.

Leonard explained that homes adjacent to wildland fires might appear to be unaffected but could quickly burn to the ground from ember intrusion. Installing newer vents sounded like money well spent.

“Keep that space clear of leaves,” Mislant said, spotting an odd triangular space where the garage roofline abutted the house. Woods suggested replacing a portion of our new backyard gate with a piece of composite wood trim, isolating the wooden fence from the wooden siding. Then the trio spotted half-empty paint cans I had set out to recycle, leaving them temporarily baking in the hot sun – how embarrassing!

More embarrassment followed when Leonard spotted marine batteries we have stored underneath our eaves. The battery cache is intended to provide emergency power; I never realized they might become a fire hazard.

Leonard, Woods and Mislant approved of our enclosed, artificial back deck, but they did point out tree branches arching dangerously close to our roof. Although the roof was a fire-retardant composite, there were leaves aplenty choking our gutter screens.

... continued on page D4



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521 Tahos Road, Orinda - Listed at \$1,489,000



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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	23	\$750,000	\$3,200,000
MORAGA	11	\$305,000	\$1,400,000
ORINDA	15	\$935,000	\$2,350,000

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

- 3118 Gloria Terrace, \$750,000, 3 Bdrms, 1757 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 7-30-15
- 3279 Mt. Diablo Court #13, \$805,000, 3 Bdrms, 2420 SqFt, 1987 YrBlt, 7-28-15;
Previous Sale: \$600,000, 07-25-12
- 1191 Pleasant Hill Circle, \$1,000,000, 3 Bdrms, 1408 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 7-30-15;
Previous Sale: \$212,000, 07-29-87
- 21 Ruth Court, \$1,175,000, 3 Bdrms, 2060 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 7-30-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,175,000, 07-30-15
- 24 Sanford Lane, \$3,200,000, 5 Bdrms, 5169 SqFt, 2007 YrBlt, 7-29-15;
Previous Sale: \$2,785,000, 06-20-13

MORAGA

- 2067 Ascot Drive #241, \$305,000, 1 Bdrms, 790 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 7-29-15;
Previous Sale: \$285,000, 11-30-07
- 831 Augusta Drive, \$850,000, 2 Bdrms, 2142 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 7-30-15;
Previous Sale: \$759,000, 12-13-12
- 1415 Camino Peral, \$725,000, 3 Bdrms, 1444 SqFt, 1972 YrBlt, 7-30-15;
Previous Sale: \$610,000, 11-16-07
- 788 Country Club Drive, \$796,000, 3 Bdrms, 1749 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 7-30-15;
Previous Sale: \$838,000, 09-12-05
- 440 Deerfield Drive, \$1,400,000, 5 Bdrms, 2969 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 7-30-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,245,000, 04-30-12
- 202 Miramonte Drive, \$590,000, 2 Bdrms, 1134 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 7-29-15;
Previous Sale: \$425,000, 03-27-08

ORINDA

- 393 Camino Sobrante, \$2,350,000, 4 Bdrms, 3653 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 7-28-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,950,000, 02-01-06
- 35 Canyon View Drive, \$1,496,000, 5 Bdrms, 3897 SqFt, 1980 YrBlt, 7-29-15;
Previous Sale: \$479,000, 10-27-88
- 18 Loma Vista Drive, \$935,000, 3 Bdrms, 1626 SqFt, 1935 YrBlt, 7-28-15;
Previous Sale: \$500,500, 06-15-99
- 11 Los Arboles, \$1,115,000, 3 Bdrms, 1855 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 7-28-15
- 33 Sanborn Road, \$988,000, 3 Bdrms, 2030 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 7-30-15;
Previous Sale: \$913,500, 06-23-05
- 7 Totterdell Court, \$1,008,000, 3 Bdrms, 1590 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 7-30-15;
Previous Sale: \$45,000, 06-29-90
- 69 Van Ripper Lane, \$1,610,000, 2 Bdrms, 2150 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 7-28-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,336,500, 07-02-04



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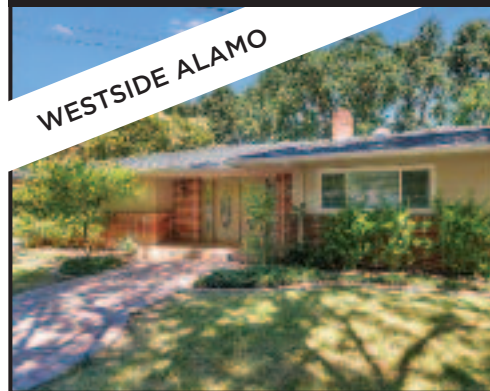
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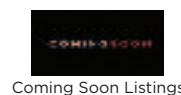


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Defensible Space

I needed to clean the gutters and trim encroaching branches back from roofline and chimneys. Our back slope was largely weed free (we tackled that project last month), earning us kudos, but the area under our pine tree was a bed of needles. I asked about that tree, plus the towering pines in neighboring yards.

“Really watch the [pine] trees,” Leonard said. “Their needles are oily, the drought has made them even more susceptible [to damage and disease] and they only live to about 40 years,” she warned. Diablo Fire Safe Council offers grants to help with the cost of limbing up pine trees, said Executive Director Cheryl Miller.

“It keeps the fire on the ground where it is easier to contain,” she said. “We have had several homeowners work together to target trees that concern them.” Where fire is concerned, “there is no benefit to sugar coating the danger posed to the Lamorinda area,” said Captain George Laing of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, whose jurisdiction includes Lafayette. “Everybody should be aware that conditions toward the end of summer approximate the conditions found at the time of the Oakland Hills fire.”

Laing said ConFire is glad to inspect home exteriors to determine the hazards posed by a wildland fire approaching a home – the risk of ignition to the home itself and the ability of firefighters to defend that home. Vegetation management is the key to a home’s ability to resist ignition, he said.

In spite of multiple minor infractions, our house exterior was deemed a “good defensible space.” (Whew!) Leonard said she would love to perform more exterior inspections, particularly in the Moraga area.

... continued from page D1

Although her staff has been more aggressive this year on weed abatement, Leonard says citing and fining residents won’t necessarily change their behavior. She strives for a balance between public safety and homeowner expenses, but says “at the end of the day, it’s my job to see firefighters go home [safely] at night.”



MOFD Fire Marshal Kathy Leonard (left) and MOFD aide Steven Woods evaluate where leaves could collect on a brush proximity to siding at the reporter’s house. MOFD aide Jessica Mislung shows where leaves could collect on a roofline, increasing fire danger. Photos Cathy Dausman

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Contra Costa County Fire Protection District: www.cccfcpd.org
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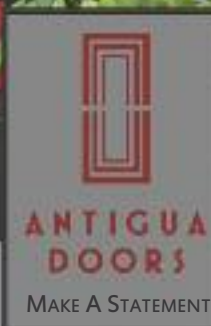
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Feng Shui

Activating the Self Knowledge and Wisdom Area

By Michele Duffy



Bookcases with books are perfect for the Self Knowledge and Wisdom area of this Lafayette child's bedroom. Photos Michele Duffy

Mandala Feng Shui



SPACE AS MEDICINE

You can activate the Self Knowledge and Wisdom area with the color blue in art.

The Self Knowledge, Self-Cultivation and Wisdom area of a home or office is often overlooked but connected to our success in all aspects of our busy lives. The beginning of the school year is a great time to make adjustments in this area of your home, especially in children's bedrooms, if your child studies there.

The self-knowledge and wisdom location on the Feng Shui Bagua map is along the front door wall and all the way to the left. Keep in mind that each Bagua area takes up a third of the total floor plan layout, not just the "corner" area, so very frequently, a room might occupy two Bagua areas or two rooms might occupy a single Bagua area (see diagram on page D10). It just depends on the space.

As a feng shui healer, I recommend making very small and slow changes in any child's bedroom, but if possible try to place the desk in the Self Knowledge and Wisdom area of the child's bedroom (left side from the bedroom door). Images of mountain ranges are helpful as well to cultivate knowledge, inner strength and inspiration, in a metal frame if possible (to minimize the wood element here).

Items that represent growth like tape measures, encyclopedias and other educational books are perfect for this area of the Bagua. Bookcases, pens, pencils, and writing tablets or notebooks are perfectly placed here as well as globes of our wonderful Earth. Proper lighting for reading and studying is a must, as is a comfortable chair for thinking. You can also activate this area with a ceramic dish of gemstones like moonstone, citrine, tourmaline and clear crystals.

Ruled by the earth element, the color for this specific "knowledge" area is close to a lapis lazuli blue. While blue is a secondary water color, in feng shui it is most often included to activate the earth element of this important wisdom Bagua area.

Wisdom is not merely about accumulation of knowledge, and so I also advise clients to place a meditation room, yoga studio or their home office in this area, since this area helps you fully absorb what you are learning.

... continued on page D10



The Self Knowledge and Wisdom area is a great place for a home office.

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Feng Shui

Self Knowledge and Wisdom Area

... continued from page D8

The "I Ching" imagery for Self Knowledge and Wisdom is that of the mountain (inner strength), which is the ultimate earth element symbol. The "mountain" area also derives contemplation and self-cultivation, and thus acknowledgement for the wisdom that comes from within.

As adults, we can also take a fresh look at our own home offices or corporate work-space offices and attend to the feng shui of this specific Bagua area to further enhance our wishes for new fall wisdom.

Each Bagua area impacts other areas. For example, Self Knowledge and Wisdom is relevant for the development of new life skills. Activating this area can help you gain the "skills" to actually know what to do with a new relationship once you find "the one," or

the insight to know how, when and where to invest the wealth you accumulate, or how to finally make healthy life choices that sustain you.

When we make changes in Self Knowledge and Self Cultivation, we immediately improve the opposite Relationship area of the Bagua, while positively affecting wealth and health, as well as one's career.

As a nod to the more serious studious tone of fall, versus the more carefree vibe of summer, take this time to renew work on your spiritual practice commitments or plan to take fall classes or retreats and focus on new, exciting goals. Feng shui is about intention; when placing things in a strong energetic and thoughtful location, you yield better results than with random placement.



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 a professional 2015 Feng Shui Consultation, contact Michele at (520) 647-4887 or send an email to spaceharmony@gmail.com.

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

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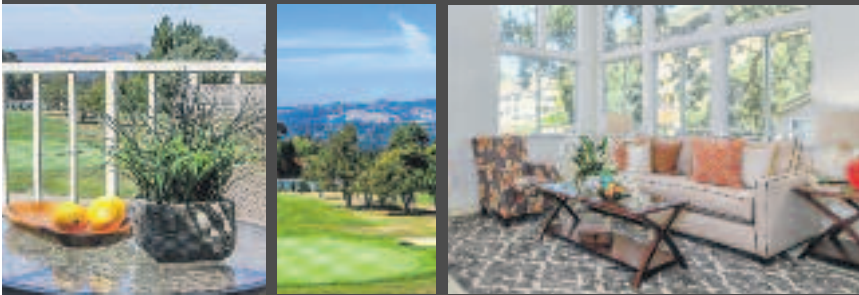


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Digging Deep - Gardening with Cynthia Brian

Pollinator Paradise!

By Cynthia Brian

"I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious." ~ Albert Einstein



A plethora of colorful homemade bird houses, feeders, and baths adorn Tom Gieryng's garden. Photos Cynthia Brian

Everyone seems to love the birds. After reading my previous month's column, "For the Birds," many people contacted me with stories of the birds in their gardens including hardwood floor installer and refinisher, Tom Gieryng. He sent me photos and asked me to come see the numerous avian amenities he had installed in his garden. Birdhouses, bird feeders, fountains, and perches occupy every tree, wall, and crevice. Most were built by Gieryng, many were someone else's trash turned into Gieryng's treasure, and all of them have been embellished, hand painted, or given a touch of whimsy. Gieryng gave new life to tossed out items including wrought iron gates, hanging baskets, pots, tricycles, and even stained glass windows with his garden ingenuity.

Growing up in Poland, Gieryng was like most teens across the world. He looked forward to making enough money to buy nice clothes and go out with

friends to party. His job was with a wood flooring company and at the time he didn't realize this teenage occupation would become his life-long career when he immigrated to America. After a few years of working for a flooring business in San Francisco, Gieryng wanted more creativity and control and opened his own company, TG Hardwood, where he was able to implement his own designs. Curiosity and a desire to reclaim discarded objects fuels his inventive nature both in his woodwork and outdoor spaces. After a hard day's work, he finds inspiration, entertainment and relaxation in his garden.

Gardens offer each of us a place to chill out, relax and be inventive. In today's high tech environment, the garden presents an instant environment to unplug, unwind and be imaginative. When I'm in my garden, I lose track of time. Although pulling weeds, turning the soil,

planting, pruning, watering and paying attention to potential pests is work, it is invigorating, offering me precious time to think without the distraction of phones, emails and pinging calendar appointments. Our gardens can be an extension of our artistic selves when we allow ourselves to be inquisitive. In my mother's garden, an ancient walnut tree has become Nonie's Bird Tree. She hangs feeders of all shapes and sizes attracting a variety of birds and hummingbirds. Vines twine around a rusted chicken chair in my front yard next to an antiquated tin birdhouse. Butterflies flit amongst the blooms and bees pollinate the various fruit trees.

Strolling with Gieryng through his garden, his obvious enthusiasm for his creations was contagious. Clients have given him cuttings of various species that he has transplanted and tended, many of them becoming prize possessions. Fuchsias, hydrangeas, roses, pelargoniums, geraniums, lavender, agapanthus, and numerous grasses found homes in his yard. A waterfall cascades down the hill adding the sound of trickling water and a place for the frogs to congregate and the hummingbirds to drink and dip. It's a haven for birds, butterflies and bees ... a true pollinator garden.

After my "For the Birds" publication, many readers asked how to attract other pollinators. To have a truly healthy garden, create a pollinator paradise. It's easy to do.

You won't need any special talents, just lots of curiosity, and this simple tip sheet.

... continued on page D14



Nonie's Bird Tree at night is an ancient walnut.

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CAL BRE #01491373

What you need to know and do to succeed at pollinator gardening:



Hydrangeas highlight a chunk of tossed out wrought iron.

1. Use plants that provide pollen and nectar. Cosmos, salvia, oregano, penstemon, coneflowers, buddleia, marigold, gaillardia, phlox, milkweed, bee balm, zinnia, Black-eyed Susan, cilantro, sunflower, sweet alyssum and wild flowers are excellent choices.
2. Provide a water source, such as a small water garden or birdbath.
3. Situate your pollinator garden in a sunny site with a windbreak.
4. Provide shelter from the elements with grasses, standing stalks, shrubs and bushes.
5. Have plants that bloom continuously throughout the season including bulbs like crocus. Make sure the garden has blooms from spring to early winter.
6. Do not use pesticides near your pollinator plants.

Be passionately curious, then relax, rejuvenate and reinvent, while attracting the pollinators—birds, bees, butterflies, bats and more.



The birds and bees love the towering sunflower growing between pots of petunias advertising Gieryng's homeland, Poland.



A waterfall cascades down the hill amongst grasses.

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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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Tom Gieryng of TG Hardwood loves gardening as much as he loves designing floors.

Cynthia Brian's Mid-Month Gardening Tips for September

PLACE bird feeders in a natural area, specifically hanging from trees, and away from the house to deter rodents from establishing residence in your home.

PICK tomatoes to enjoy in these last two weeks of summer brilliance. According to the USDA, there are over 25,000 varieties of tomatoes.

GOT CLOVER? Clover is a positive plant in the garden and lawn because it grabs oxygen from the air and stores it in the soil. Birds pecking at your lawn are not eating it. They are dining on insects that could be harmful to your lawn. The birds are your friends indicating that your lawn has an invader.

EAT watermelon when it's warm. Watermelon is actually a vegetable, not a fruit, filled with 92 percent water. Time to make a watermelon popsicle. (The popsicle was invented in 1905 ... quite tasty history.)

DOWNLOAD a free pollinator guide for the United States and Canada at <http://www.pollinator.org/guides.htm>. For the Lamorinda area, click on "California Dry Steppe".

MARK your calendars for the Sept. 26 Pear and Wine Festival in Moraga. Stop by the Be the Star You Are booth for free seeds and other giveaways including a complimentary brand new book as part of the literacy outreach project, "Read, Lead, Succeed!" http://starstyleradio.net/Events/Entries/2015/9/26_Pear_%26_Wine_Festival_2015.html

BUY tulips, hyacinths, and crocus to refrigerate for six weeks before planting.

REGISTER your pollinator garden, large or small, or even a container that provides pollen and nectar to bees, butterflies, bats, flies and more at www.millionpollinatorgardens.org.

RAKE fallen leaves to add to your compost pile along with your lawn clippings.



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136 Ravenhill Road Lovely 2bd/2ba, 2216sf twnhm full of space, oversized rms, high ceilings + light. Charming decor, natural colors, lots of style by artist owner. Easy in/outdr living, patios, very private, tranquil. **\$850,000**

ORINDA



94 Meadow View Road Single level 4bd/2ba in ideal sought after Glorietta area. 1888sf on .31ac lot. Updated kitchen, hwd flrs, dual pane windows. Lg. sep. workshop. Great loc. close to downtown Orinda & Lafayette. **\$995,000**

ORINDA



50 Don Gabriel Way South Orinda home features open floor plan w/custom cabinetry, hardwood floors, updated kitchen. Patio & outdoor dining area, large terraced upslope backyard perfect for relaxation. **\$1,195,000**

ORINDA



74 Estates Drive Very special home & property. Custom mid-century Modern 4bd/3ba on 1.09ac w/pool, level yard, paths & patios + 90 vine vineyard. Kit./fam rm combo in heart of Glorietta. Views. **\$1,650,000**

ORINDA



25 Rustic Way Impressive property w/top-of-the-hill privacy, fab. views & custom built 6bd/5.5ba home of apx. 8514sf on 8.14 acres. Racquetball court, pool w/unique waterslide, tennis court. **\$3,695,000**

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1849 St. Andrews Drive Light & bright detached 4 bdrm MCC home w/big views & extra large deck. Kitchen/family rm combo, formal liv & din rms, master retreat on main level. Golf, tennis, swim & clubhouse. **\$1,189,000**

MORAGA



1825 Joseph Drive Single-level in The Bluffs. 3 Bedrooms, 2 Baths, hardwood floors, beautiful views, private setting, sparkling pool and possible vineyard site. **\$1,285,000**

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5 Paseo Linares Spectacular new construction. Amazing Med. Villa w/chic interiors, spacious rms, views, lvl yd & pool site. 4142sf home w/ 5bd/4.5ba, formal dining, Cook's kitchen, covered lanai. **\$2,525,000**

LAFAYETTE



3 Gilmore Court Charming & completely remodeled in 2008 custom single level 3bd/2ba home. Hdwd flrs, Chef's kitchen, great room, formal dining room & seamless indoor/ outdoor living. **\$1,080,000**

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145 Camelia Lane A masterful expression of contemporary design in Happy Valley. Stunning new construction. Apx. 4486sf, 4bd/4ba+ 2 half baths, formal dining, Cook's kitchen, office & views! **\$3,295,000**

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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. **\$3,550,000**

LAFAYETTE



1141 Vallecito Court Treasured Happy Valley estate custom built in 2006 w/finest craftsmanship. Chef's kitchen, gorgeous master, ofc, fam rm, home gym. Pool, spa, frplc & level lawn w/views. Detached guest house. **\$3,900,000**

PLEASANT HILL



2180 Geary Road #1 Lovely single level end unit. Rare 3 bedroom & 2 bath condo that lives like a single family home! Fabulous location! A must see! **\$489,000**

PLEASANT HILL



20 Whitfield Court Great 2.58 acre parcel at top of knoll w/views of Mount Diablo & ideal privacy. Truly special setting sites for development zoned R-10 & R-15. Wonderful opportunity for investment. **\$1,750,000**

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3311 Rossmoor Pkwy #4 A rarity! Fantastic, level in (no steps) Cascade model on golf course w/views of hills & course from most living spaces. Granite kitchen w/breakfast nook, plantation shutters, view deck. **\$659,000**



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