

# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 09 Issue 20 Wednesday, December 2, 2015



Cynthia Brian's December Gardening Guide ...read on page D8

## Recent Rain Small Respite for Drought-Stressed Trees

By Chris Lavin



Redwoods are especially suffering in the Lamorinda area with the drought. The upper branches and lower ones, like these, die off to conserve water, according to experts.

Photo Chris Lavin

Mother Nature has been a tease. One good rainstorm – even a few claps of thunder – and she figures that is enough. She is even going to give us a few more little showers in the next couple of weeks, but

after four years of holding back, it is of little use to thousands of our most adored neighbors: the trees.

“Four years is a long time,” said Kenny Murakami, who runs the Moraga Garden Center. “I think all the

trees are hurting.”

Usually by conventional standards, rainy season starts Oct. 1. But for the past four years, Mother Nature has turned her back on the calendar and crossed her arms with a huff. The

brief showers that have been teasing the landscape here and there have not even begun to make a dent in the drought that has hit Northern California, and it is evidenced in the extreme stress on Lamorinda trees.

“I’ve never seen such mortality,” said Mark Silva, a ranger with the East Bay Municipal Utility District. “We’re seeing dead trees everywhere.” Redwoods and other trees are dying, or showing signs of stress that he has not experienced before. “I’ve never seen anything like it.”

Whether in yards or parks or natural areas throughout our neighborhoods, trees are showing signs of significant stress. Many have died, others are moving toward the nursing home. More dead branches are falling, more needles are raining down, and arborists are busy trimming branches and felling dead trees.

“It (the drought) is definitely not good for the trees,” said Abby Bill, a nursery worker at Moraga Garden Center.

“They’re just having a harder time reaching down to the water table,” her boss Murakami said.

... continued on page D4

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## Red Bows & Silver Bells Happy Holidays

We would like to say thank you to our clients and friends for their continued support and trust over the years. It is because of you that we continue to be leaders in the Lamorinda residential real estate market.

May your holiday season bring you good health, continued happiness, and prosperity in 2016!



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## Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	7	\$790,000	\$2,405,000
MORAGA	5	\$1,036,000	\$1,450,000
ORINDA	11	\$765,000	\$2,400,000

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

3 Gilmore Court, \$1,300,000, 3 Bdrms, 1777 SqFt, 1953 YrBl, 10-14-15;

Previous Sale: \$876,000, 06-15-10

3921 Happy Valley Road, \$2,405,000, 3 Bdrms, 4583 SqFt, 1996 YrBl, 10-9-15

948 Janet Lane, \$1,025,000, 3 Bdrms, 1739 SqFt, 1950 YrBl, 10-13-15;

Previous Sale: \$500,000, 06-14-00

3478 Monroe Avenue, \$790,000, 2 Bdrms, 968 SqFt, 1952 YrBl, 10-5-15;

Previous Sale: \$80,000, - -

3395 Moraga Boulevard, \$965,000, 3 Bdrms, 1534 SqFt, 1963 YrBl, 10-5-15

1440 Reliez Valley Road, \$1,269,000, 992 SqFt, 1899 YrBl, 10-14-15;

Previous Sale: \$320,000, 04-01-97

3020 Rohrer Drive, \$1,450,000, 4 Bdrms, 1993 SqFt, 1961 YrBl, 10-6-15

### MORAGA

244 Corliss Drive, \$1,300,000, 4 Bdrms, 2294 SqFt, 1965 YrBl, 10-9-15;

Previous Sale: \$995,000, 06-24-11

108 Hardie Drive, \$1,036,000, 3 Bdrms, 1828 SqFt, 1962 YrBl, 10-5-15;

Previous Sale: \$699,000, 01-23-04

1825 Joseph Drive, \$1,260,000, 4 Bdrms, 2074 SqFt, 1971 YrBl, 10-6-15;

Previous Sale: \$750,000, 08-20-01

121 Paseo Del Rio, \$1,450,000, 4 Bdrms, 2650 SqFt, 1973 YrBl, 10-6-15;

Previous Sale: \$119,000, 09-04-15

132 Selborne Way, \$1,300,000, 5 Bdrms, 2463 SqFt, 1965 YrBl, 10-7-15

### ORINDA

170 Camino Sobrante, \$1,270,000, 3 Bdrms, 1808 SqFt, 1955 YrBl, 10-5-15;

Previous Sale: \$460,000, 04-25-96

17 Charles Hill Road, \$1,425,000, 3 Bdrms, 2156 SqFt, 1957 YrBl, 10-13-15;

Previous Sale: \$925,000, 01-10-03

111 Coral Drive, \$1,050,000, 4 Bdrms, 1548 SqFt, 1957 YrBl, 10-13-15

63 Donna Maria Way, \$1,350,000, 3 Bdrms, 1992 SqFt, 1954 YrBl, 10-14-15;

Previous Sale: \$428,000, 05-20-97

122 El Toyonal, \$925,000, 3 Bdrms, 1883 SqFt, 1948 YrBl, 10-6-15;

Previous Sale: \$268,000, 05-31-96

74 Estates Drive, \$1,675,000, 4 Bdrms, 2844 SqFt, 1966 YrBl, 10-5-15

15 Monte Vista Road, \$765,000, 2 Bdrms, 1930 SqFt, 1951 YrBl, 10-9-15;

Previous Sale: \$306,500, 01-17-92

30 Oak Drive, \$845,000, 3 Bdrms, 2227 SqFt, 1965 YrBl, 10-13-15

215 Rheem Boulevard, \$1,250,000, 4 Bdrms, 2122 SqFt, 1956 YrBl, 10-13-15;

Previous Sale: \$695,000, 08-08-03

521 Tahos Road, \$1,465,000, 4 Bdrms, 2614 SqFt, 1967 YrBl, 10-9-15;

Previous Sale: \$1,220,000, 06-18-12

319 Tappan Terrace, \$2,400,000, 5 Bdrms, 3769 SqFt, 1988 YrBl, 10-9-15;

Previous Sale: \$2,300,000, 10-29-04



*Happy Holidays*



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and a new year filled with health, happiness and success!*



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# Recent Rain Small Respite for Drought-Stressed Trees

... continued from page D1

Dead and dying trees are not only a fire hazard, but a blight on the landscape. Wetter weather that might or might not be coming could ameliorate fires. Yet homeowners with a beloved tree – and mandatory restrictions on water use – are wringing their hands over some of their favorites, and have them considering gray-water systems and more to conserve water to feed the trees.

“I think people are trying to figure out a lot of things,” Bill said. “No one wants to see this.”

So far this year, the Lamorinda area has received about 1.5 inches of rain. The average, adult live oak tree drinks 20 to 30 gallons of water per day, and its roots are relatively shallow – they spread out as wide as their canopies. Some homeowners have taken to installing drip systems around their trees to enhance the natural flow from the sky.

And while estimates vary, redwoods slurp up as much as 300 gallons a day, which then transpires off into the atmosphere. (Their roots go deeper than oaks.) Recently scientists such as Steve Sillett of Humboldt State University and Todd Dawson of University of California-Berkeley have found that redwoods also suck up as much as 40 percent of their water from fog during the dry months. After all, carrying hydration from the water table up 20-or-so stories isn't all that easy. But alas, it turns out that redwoods can take in the fog directly through their bark and needles.

If only there was more fog. So far, Mother Nature has said nix on that, mostly, too.

## Ways to Protect Your Trees

Before the rains start in earnest – if they do indeed start and stay in earnest – homeowners have various ways of helping their stressed-out trees that have been suffering from the four-year drought. Yet, there are problems besides lack of water.

One: Many homeowners have planted trees with high water requirements. “Trees planted with high water needs such as magnolias, weeping birches and other non-native trees have been planted in areas, particularly lawns, that are now not receiving water or in areas with inadequate irrigation,” said Lorie Edwards of Advance Tree.

Two: People are still spraying their gardens with hoses.

It's kind of a Vegas craps game to see which species will recover. Birches are weeping, willows are shedding their skins like birches. And while a wagging finger can say the homeowner is at fault for planting a non-native, it is not just the non-natives that are suffering. “Even our native trees that are used to our annual summer drought can suffer because of this extended drought,” Edwards said.

Stressed-out trees are also more susceptible to diseases and pests, she said. Edwards recommends what arborists and landscapers say, too. “The remedy is obviously to increase the water to these trees,” she wrote by email. “One method is to use a deep-root irrigation device.” That means, yes, burying it under dirt and mulch and giving it a regular squirt through the household system, metered through EBMUD.

Another is to mulch and mulch. Do not, according to arborists, just lay your drip line on the ground. Pile some mulch over it. So dig down, put your drip in, then set a timer.

And a lot of love won't hurt, either.

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# Feng Shui Tips to Warm Up Winter Months

By Michele Duffy



*A white kitchen shows off food the best*

How do you create holiday glow in your home? For many, it starts with a personal commitment to glow from within. Even in winter, our hearts and minds should be like bamboo: flexible and pliant, not rigid and frozen. Bring fiery, passionate warmth inside with loving gestures that affirm your commitment to self so you can manifest joy for others fully and completely.

What are the rituals you preserve each year and what new traditions will you try this year? The holiday season offers so many opportunities to introduce grace into our lives, for our personal enrichment as well as for the benefit of others, and we should keep in mind that if a holiday tradition stresses us out, then perhaps it is better to instead create space for what makes us happy, content and healthy.

Winter is ruled by the water element – think freezing cold ice and snow – so we do well to activate lots of the fire element in our now much cozier homes and even turn some of that attention to the workplace. Fire elements balance out the water element. Use spherical sculptures, candles, red Santa mugs to hold piping-hot peppermint cocoa, red berry arrangements, red bowed wreaths gracing the front

entrance, plush red throws and pillows, and, of course, fire in safely-lit gas fireplaces to take winter's chill down a few notches.

Sound feng shui incorporates the five elements and when a space is truly balanced, using space as medicine, we can feel the benefits immediately. The fire element area of the Feng Shui Bagua is fame and reputation, but interestingly, this area also rules respect – with self-respect a large component of that.

This area is located at the far middle from the front entrance. It is a good placement for the kitchen with the fire energy of the stove. The stove and kitchen are highlighted around the holidays since holiday meals are prepared in this area of the home. Make sure stoves are functioning properly, new batteries are in the smoke detectors, there are abundant fire extinguishers, and carefully supervise candles. Or, if you prefer, use battery-operated candles.

Some tips for sound kitchen feng shui include cleaning your kitchen thoroughly, tossing out end-of-year fridge stuff, cleaning out date sensitive items from pantries to prepare for festive seasonal extras in the house, bringing a festive touch to countertops with holiday wine stoppers, filling the air with holiday scents like soy cinnamon vanilla candles, and adorning kitchens with fir tree groupings or wreaths, gingerbread houses or an advent calendar to delight the kid in us all. We all spend so much time in the kitchen, even if we are not the ones cooking, so bringing some joy and glitter to this area adds the warmth we need for sustenance during the winter months. Where your kitchen is placed in your home also will determine if the favorite color white for kitchen walls is truly auspicious in your particular home. It is believed that white shows off the colorful food best and enhances healthy eating.

As Feb. 8, 2016 and the New Year of the Yang Fire Monkey approaches again, the fire element continues to play a central energetic role so any fire safety preparation taken now will benefit the mindful.

Allow the warmth of the season to wash over you and ground you, restore you, renew you, so one reflectively gains powerful clarity about this and next year's lessons. Do your best to enjoy this holiday season's gifts with loved ones near.



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](mailto:spaceharmony@gmail.com).



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# Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for December

By Cynthia Brian

*"I look upon the pleasure we take in a garden as one of the most innocent delights in human life." – Cicero*



Cynthia's mother decorates so that Santa can find the ranch.

Photo Cynthia Brian

It is hard to believe that the holidays are already here. Wasn't it just yesterday that I was taking down Christmas decorations?

What would the holidays be without the high voltage displays of thousands of twinkling lights illuminating our landscapes? We drive around neighborhoods "ooing and aahing" at the inflatable snowmen waving to us, Santa's sleigh on the rooftops tethered to his blinking reindeer, and flickering candy canes hanging from tree branches. My mom's house is lit up like Disneyland to make sure that Santa can find his way to our ranch.

My last few columns have initiated numerous emails and comments. It appears that gardeners are very interested in hugelkultur as well as growing grass that is not water thirsty.

Regarding the hugels, from the state of Washington I received this very astute email:

"I just read your gardening guide and immediately thought about how the trees where we go camping do this naturally. Frequently, trees have started by growing from a stump

or downed tree trunk. Then, over time, everything mounds up at the base of the new tree. The spaces underneath provide habitat for a multitude of creatures, and the rotting logs, needles, and leaves are material for insects to do terra-forming. They combine the organic with rock that continually slides down from the mountains and into the streams and eventually becomes sand, to form rich soil.

Another thing all this debris on the ground does is to shade the soil, keeping it cooler and protected from evaporation. We use rocks in favor of bark or mulch in many places in our yard. I have thought for years about the practice in the Southwest of keeping all the undergrowth cleared out of forests to help with the wildfire problem – how it sterilizes the forest, taking away opportunities for habitat and soil protection.

We certainly had more than our share of wildfires in Washington State the last couple of years, and I will admit the forest is quite different in those regions. The trees, until you get up really far into the mountains, are very spaced out with no green undergrowth. They traditionally have very cold winters with a lot of snow that lingers, then long, very hot and dry summers.

The mounding practice is something we see nature doing all the time in the mountains near us." KC

KC hit the nail on the head! I was really thrilled to receive this correspondence because hugelkultur derived from exactly this natural forest procedure. In my own yard I have now built two hugels and am planning to continue to build them, especially on my hillsides to prevent erosion, maintain water, and allow plants to grow deeper roots.

On the subject of lawns, I have installed three different areas of Pearl's Premium grass: sun, shade, and sun-shade. It is still too early to report results to you but I do promise to keep you posted on how this miracle turf flourishes. Many of you are very interested in growing a low maintenance grass. With just one or two weeks left of optimum weather, buy new top soil and start sowing. The seed may be carried at your local garden centers or big box stores, but if not, go online to [www.PearlsPremium.com](http://www.PearlsPremium.com). Don't forget to type in "Blue Moon" at check out to receive a 20 percent discount and free shipping.

The festival of lights is upon us as we hark the heralded angels and remember the reason for the season. Light a fire in your heart and shine brightly with love. Tidy your garden, then enjoy the merriment.

... continued on page D10



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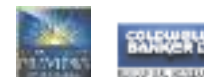
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## Cynthia Brian's Garden Guide for December

- **POT** an amaryllis for mid-winter blooms happening eight to 12 weeks after first watering. All you need is a small pot not much bigger than the bulb, soil and water.
- **ADD** alliums to your planting schedule for spring lollipop blooms. Voles, rabbits, deer and squirrels will not eat these onion family bulbs.
- **COVER** azaleas and tender shrubs with burlap, sheets or blankets (any fabric will do) to prevent damage from drastic drops in temperature.
- **HARVEST** prickly pear when the skins are red. Wear gloves and use tongs to peel before adding to salads.
- **CUT** branches from redwoods, cedars, pines and other evergreens to use indoors for your yuletide décor.
- **HANG** a spray of magnolia leaves tied in a colorful ribbon on your mailbox. Magnolias with the coned seedpods stimulate a festive welcome.
- **GATHER** pinecones. Sprinkle with a cinnamon oil for a lovely holiday fragrance.
- **CHANGE** out your current houseplants with colorful seasonal plants including cyclamen, paperwhites and poinsettia. Beautiful long blooming cymbidium orchids are currently available in stores. Orchids contribute an elegance and beauty to every room.
- **RAKE** the fallen leaves to add to your compost pile.
- **PRUNE** roses for the final burst of December blooms before the January pruning begins.
- **BE** eco-friendly and wrap gifts in used newspaper with twine. You'll save money while saving the earth. And while you are at it, repurpose Christmas cards into gift tags!
- **PLANT** cover crops to enrich the soil over winter. Good choices include fava beans, alfalfa, clover and mustard.
- **PURCHASE** a living tree for your Hanukkah bush or Christmas tree.
- **ALLOW** winter's coat of bright berries, rosehips, moss and boughs to be the inspiration for your decorating.



*Magnolia cones turn red in December.*

*Photos Cynthia Brian*



*A combination of ferns and poinsettias brighten a porch.*



*Moss is pretty growing on a winter wall.*



*Yew berries are excellent for holiday decorating.*

- **CARE** for the birds by keeping feeders clean and filled. Make sure to provide a water source and shelter.

- **HOLIDAY FAVOR:** Help local charity Be the Star You Are!® without spending a penny. "If you purchased a TV or computer screen between 1999 and 2006, you are due a refund and can donate it directly to Be the Star You Are. You will receive a tax receipt once the donations have been dispersed. Please do this today. It costs you nothing. Thanks from Be the Star You Are. <http://www.donatedirect.net/be-the-star-you-are-crt/> Read more: <http://www.btsya.com/>

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If a tree fails in a field, damages would be minor. But if it fails and strikes a person or property the consequences would be severe. The risk of an ISA certified arborist from Advance Tree Service assess and considers both the likelihood of failure and the likelihood of impacting, the identified targets. The target zone for dead trees is larger than those with live, flexible branches, because dead and brittle branches are more likely to shatter on impact spreading debris.

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

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Although it is the end of the season, boxwoods, hydrangeas, rosemary and greenery brighten this corner.

As we prepare for the holidays, let's offer thoughts and actions of faith, hope, and love with the expectation that peace can prevail on our beautiful planet. Take pleasure in nature. Our gardens are a precious refuge. Happy Holidays!

Happy Gardening, Happy Growing!



Cynthia Brian among the orchids.

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# Lamorinda's Leading Independent Real Estate Firm

## 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



**46 Cedar Terrace** Excellent 3.93 acre property located at the end of Cedar Terrace, off of Cedar Lane. Views and Privacy!

**\$699,000**

## ORINDA



*New Listing*

**86 La Espiral** Situated in heart of one of Orinda's most coveted & sought-after neighborhoods. OCC custom built contemporary 4beds/2.5baths home on .69ac w/ views of the East Bay Hills!

**\$949,000**

## ORINDA



*Coming Soon*

**53 E. Altarinda Drive** Orinda Woods Single Family Home recently remodeled w/quality materials. Chef's kitchen opens to Casual Dining area & Family room. Gorgeous landscaping, deck w/pergola, pool & hot tub.

**Call for Price**

## ORINDA



**407 Ridge Gate Road** Rarely available detached 1 story in Orindawoods. Open floor plan with dramatic vaulted ceilings. Stunning outdoor space including generous decks for the ultimate privacy.

**\$1,495,000**

## ORINDA



**8 Camino Del Diablo** Stunning Contemporary rebuilt in 2002 by MGHG Designs. Impeccable design & architectural finishes. Chef's kitchen w/top of the line appliances, Carrera marble counters, radiant flrs.

**\$2,100,000**

## MORAGA



*For Lease*

**589 Augusta Drive** Fabulous Moraga Country Club. All member benefits. Single level detached home along 1st fairway. 3bd/2.5ba, 2687sf, family room off spacious kitchen. Excellent schools.

**\$6,000/month**

## MORAGA



*New Listing*

**1817 School Street** Updated kitchen, baths, fresh paint, lighting, dual paned windows and more! Steps from schools, transportation and shopping.

**\$1,195,000**

## LAFAYETTE



*Pending*

**593 Antonio Court** Home for the Holidays! Stylishly remodeled 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms + office home. Wonderful Burton Valley cul-de-sac location with a large flat yard.

**\$1,325,000**

## LAFAYETTE



**1100 Rahara Drive** Custom Upper Happy Valley home. 4 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, hardwood floors, resort-like yard, lush landscaping & beautiful views.

**\$2,195,000**

## LAFAYETTE



**23 Sessions Road** Gated English Manor 12.18ac 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



**5 Burton Vista Court** Spectacular 7bd/9+ba, 8986sf Estate w/luxury amenities in grand oversized spaces. Premium 2.25ac parcel w/sport court, sun-drenched pool, pavilion w/kitchen, dressing rms & showers. **\$6,595,000**

## EL SOBRANTE



**5050 Hilltop Drive** NOT TO MISS! Great location. 2 bedrooms, 1 bath, 1088sf with views of Mt. Tamalpais from backyard. Spacious eat-in kitchen, hardwood floors & lots of storage. Probate sale, sold "as-is". **\$310,000**

## WALNUT CREEK



**1501 Canyonwood Court #2** Fabulous Sonoma Wrap w/2bd/2ba + washer/dryer in unit. Cultured marble countertops in kitchen/baths. Elec. chair lift at stairs. Rear veranda enclosed, side veranda open. Views. **\$395,000**

## WALNUT CREEK



*New Price*

**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. **\$599,000**

## WALNUT CREEK



*Pending*

**898 Amberwood Court** Beautiful New Construction Single Story Home (one of five) in desirable cul-de-sac nghbrhd. 5 Beds/4.5 baths, formal dining rm, chef's kitchen, beautiful finishes, 3 car garage & more! **\$1,850,000**



## THE VILLAGE ASSOCIATES:

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