

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 09 Issue 26 Wednesday, February 24, 2016



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian ...read on page D16

Into the Wilder-ness

By Victor Ryerson



The Wilder development in the Orinda hills

Photo Victor Ryerson

It may be a bit of an exaggeration to say that the residents of Wilder are pioneers, but being the first homeowners in a whole new community is a phenomenon Orinda has not witnessed since the middle of the last century. Surrounded by open space and accessible only from Highway 24, Wilder is isolated like no other Orinda neighborhood, yet it is a stone's throw from downtown, and just a little farther from the bright lights of the East Bay. Wilder residents can easily choose between the two for their shopping and entertainment needs, yet they are cloistered in a valley so rural at this point that they have to take precautions to ensure their pets do not become dinner for the coyotes that roam the hills around them.

Once part of a ranch owned by airline mogul Ed Daly, tucked in the Gateway Valley between the Orinda

crossroads and the Oakland Hills and set on 1,600 acres of land, with homes boasting 2,500 to 6,000 square feet of living space, Wilder is its own oasis. It took almost three decades for Wilder to get to the point where homes started rising on the newly graded hills, and the path is nearly as littered with defunct developers as the Chilkoot Trail is with the artifacts of Alaska gold seekers. With 16 of the 19 finished homes actually occupied, their occupants, at least for now, are very much pioneers in Orinda's outback.

They are coming from places close by like Lafayette and Berkeley, and from faraway places like Atlanta and New York. They are predominantly families of young professionals with children ranging from newborn to college age. Their reasons for coming are familiar to all Orindans: Orinda's proximity to the metropolitan

centers of San Francisco and Oakland; its celebrated schools; and the quality of life in a remarkably peaceful semi-rural town buffered from the urban world just over the hills by seemingly endless open space.

Mark and Shannon Vicencio, the third residents to move into Wilder, came from Lafayette with their two teenage sons. They have lived there for over two years, enabling them to get a feel for the rhythm of life in the new community. "I love it," Shannon says of her life in Wilder. One feature of the development that she finds particularly appealing is what she calls the "stadium effect" of the construction, with houses built either uphill or downhill from one another, which means that neighbors will not be looking across the street into each other's living rooms.

For Madelyn Mallory, 60, and her husband, Dr. Mark Bresnik, 64, Wilder's location was an important factor in their decision to move from just over the hill in Berkeley's Hiller Highlands neighborhood. Mallory, a financial planner who works in San Francisco, had previously lived for many years in Orinda and was eager to return. Bresnik, who works in San Mateo, supported her aspirations, but made it clear that Wilder was as far as he was willing to commute from the Contra Costa side of the tunnel. It was a good compromise: She takes BART from Orinda, arriving early enough to find parking at the station, while he battles the traffic to get to his job in Foster City.

Not surprisingly, real estate in Wilder does not come cheap. Lots have been selling in the range of \$700,000 to \$1.5 million, and homes from about \$1.8 million to just under \$3 million. The demographics of its inhabitants reflect these prices.

... continued on page D4

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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	10	\$810,000	\$3,275,000
MORAGA	6	\$660,000	\$1,710,000
ORINDA	7	\$823,000	\$2,117,000

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

- 21 Burnt Oak Circle, \$1,080,000, 3 Bdrms, 1481 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 1-28-16;
Previous Sale: \$85,000, 08-16-76
- 3 Foothill Park Terrace, \$1,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 2282 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 1-21-16;
Previous Sale: \$655,000, 08-07-01
- 3693 Highland Road #3695, \$875,000, 2101 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 1-15-16;
Previous Sale: \$368,000, 09-29-98
- 610 Huntleigh Drive, \$1,330,000, 4 Bdrms, 2038 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 1-21-16;
Previous Sale: \$993,000, 05-07-10
- 3397 La Caminita, \$1,925,000, 5 Bdrms, 3260 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 1-22-16;
Previous Sale: \$1,420,000, 08-20-10
- 4146 Los Arabis Drive, \$1,625,000, 4 Bdrms, 1727 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 1-29-16;
Previous Sale: \$725,000, 06-27-14
- 20 Ruth Court, \$863,000, 5 Bdrms, 2106 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 1-28-16;
Previous Sale: \$910,000, 07-20-05
- 23 Sessions Road, \$3,275,000, 5396 SqFt, 1997 YrBlt, 1-26-16
- 3185 Stanley Boulevard, \$810,000, 3 Bdrms, 1124 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 1-21-16
- 3331 Vaughn Road, \$1,308,500, 4 Bdrms, 1945 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 1-22-16

MORAGA

- 176 Calle La Mesa, \$1,075,000, 4 Bdrms, 1946 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 1-15-16;
Previous Sale: \$994,000, 06-30-06
- 1438 Camino Peral, \$660,000, 3 Bdrms, 1348 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 1-15-16;
Previous Sale: \$542,000, 12-03-13
- 1084 Larch Avenue, \$1,135,000, 2 Bdrms, 2596 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 1-25-16
- 3 Paseo Linares, \$1,710,000, 4 Bdrms, 5074 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 1-28-16;
Previous Sale: \$725,000, 08-16-90
- 307 Rheem Boulevard, \$916,500, 3 Bdrms, 1685 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 1-29-16;
Previous Sale: \$235,000, 10-04-88
- 1817 School Street, \$1,300,000, 4 Bdrms, 2050 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 1-15-16;
Previous Sale: \$78,500, 09-11-75

ORINDA

- 53 East Altarinda Drive, \$2,117,000, 4 Bdrms, 3145 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 1-28-16;
Previous Sale: \$890,000, 08-29-01
- 7 Hartford Road, \$823,000, 3 Bdrms, 1936 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 1-15-16;
Previous Sale: \$765,000, 11-07-03
- 12 Las Mesas Path, \$840,000, 2 Bdrms, 1268 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 1-15-16
- 18 Lind Court, \$1,247,500, 3 Bdrms, 1350 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 1-22-16;
Previous Sale: \$560,000, 05-03-02
- 17 Overhill Road, \$975,000, 3 Bdrms, 1969 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 1-15-16;
Previous Sale: \$345,000, 07-07-89
- 26 Parkway Court, \$2,000,000, 5 Bdrms, 3769 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 1-21-16
- 21 Sandy Court, \$1,700,000, 4 Bdrms, 3311 SqFt, 2005 YrBlt, 1-29-16;
Previous Sale: \$1,650,000, 04-11-06



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Into the Wilder-ness

... continued from page D1

Brooks Street's Perry says that about 20 percent of Wilder's current residents are empty nesters.

Bresnik and Mallory fit this profile. Essentially empty nesters – Mallory's 27-year-old daughter has boomeranged home while she gets her career established – they claim to be Wilder's oldest residents. As the sixth to move there, next door to the very first occupants, they are certainly among the earliest. The younger residents tend to work for large tech companies like Sales Force, Paypal, and Survey Monkey, or in biotech. Many of the children attend nearby private schools, but some attend Orinda public schools and high schools in the Acalanes Union High School District. Buses are available for students of both public and private schools.

Both families extol Wilder's proximity to open space, and they make full use of it. Mallory says she and her daughter particularly enjoy hiking the winding trail between the development and neighboring Sibley Regional Park to get away from it all. The Vicencios make regular use of Wilder's local system of trails and paths to walk their two golden retrievers. The valley is home to a great many songbirds and raptors that are generally in view, and Mallory especially likes to watch the local flock of redwinged blackbirds doing aerobatics "at that magic time" before dusk.

To most of us who zip past Wilder on Highway 24, the most salient feature of the project is the growing group of five sports fields that cascade down from the



Photo Andy Scheck

top of the saddle separating the valley from the rest of the world. The fields, included in Wilder as a condition for building the development, are already busy, especially after school and on weekends. Michelle Lacy, Orinda's Director of Parks and Recreation, reports that they are used for youth and adult soccer, lacrosse, youth

and adult rugby, adult softball, youth baseball, and field hockey. She cites 2015 use by no less than 19 different sports organizations from both sides of the tunnel, including some from Berkeley and Martinez-Pleasant Hill.

... continued on page D17



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Broker Tour 3/1 Open House 3/6

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Open Sunday, Feb 26, 1-4 pm



The Ebb and the Flow

By Andi Peterson Brown

The spring selling season is upon us, and our market has never been hotter. While most people are aware that our housing market is part of broader economic cycles, many people do not realize that there is also a seasonal influence affecting market activity throughout the year. And when it comes to this annual cycle, all months are not created equal. Sleepy August cannot hold a candle to lively March, spirited April, and bubbly May. And poor January. It tends to get lost in the shuffle.

Why is this? The answer is quite logical. The spring and early summer weather is the perfect backdrop for selling a home. Gardens are blooming, the sun is shining, and it's easy for buyers to get out and see what's available. Many of those buyers also pay attention to kindergarten and school registration dates. Thus, market activity is almost always at its highest during April, May, and June. We tend to see activity drop off towards the end of July as both buyers and sellers take their vacations and enjoy their summer days. Here in Lamorinda, once the school year kicks in and routines are established, there tends to be a second surge in market activity. This "mini-spring" lasts through the beginning of November, but once Thanksgiving hits, market activity usually drops off. Most people are in holiday mode, and buying or selling real estate slides onto the backburner if it is not a necessity.

Spring buyers are out in full force. If you've been thinking about selling your home, there has never been a better time.



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Stylish Solutions

Discovering New Design Trends "Behind the Drapery"

By Ann McDonald



Ambiente Trade Show tabletops are drool worthy for this lover of all things dining. Exhibitors come from across the globe to showcase what's new and next. Here, for 2016 we see pastels and primary colors in bakeware and tabletop. Official press photo, 2016 www.messefrankfurt.com

Welcome to "the season," as we say in the design business. We are in the middle of a time of year when trade shows abound, and comfortable shoes start traveling with us discreetly in purses, whipped out for the walk between booths and parties. From the Kitchen and Bath Industry Show in Las Vegas to the shows across the pond, I thought it would be fun to give you, Stylish Suburbanite, an inside peek at a few standards, as they say, "behind the drapery."

These are industry-only trade shows where designers, architects, builders, suppliers and manufacturers showcase their wares. We glean training, access to unreleased products and test models, and learn about what will hit the market six to eight, or in some cases, 12 to 16 months out.

KBIS: The Kitchen Bath and Industry Show. Held in different locations across the country, the 'mac-daddy' for the western United States is held in Las Vegas, often in conjunction with several smaller home-gear shows having to do with drapery, building and property development.

At KBIS, designers learn about new introductions from appliance manufacturers to tile companies, hardware brands to lighting manufacturers. What was the hot ticket this year? Custom cabinetry and pretty much custom everything.

Ambiente. Just finished, this is the leading international consumer goods show held in Germany. Here we find the newest from enamel cookware to Versace home's latest porcelain introductions to the next best-unknown lighting designer. Ambiente is an extraordinary show, and often showcases trends that will hit the U.S.

market, six to 12 months out. The trends this year? Nature on and in man-made materials, including porcelain. We see sand and other raw materials transferred and printed onto and into anything from porcelain to textiles. From table linens to tiles, nature influences, from raw to overtly floral and colorful, were everywhere.

Maison Objet. The show. Well, not the only show, but considered "the" show, here you find the most fabulous introductions of textiles, product and furniture design as well as historical and educational seminars with inside access to designers and fabricators. Exhibitors come from across the globe. One of the hallmarks of this show, as well as Ambiente is the use of unusual and custom materials.

The use of hand formed objects, from hand blocked fabrics, to non-assembly line pillows, and lighting fixtures where even the 'same form' was not an exact replica of the one adjacent stands out. There is a return to perfectly imperfect in the design world, a stronger sense of couture level production, where you are acutely aware that a hand has made this, not a machine alone.

Maison has a U.S. show scheduled for the second time this year in Miami.

High Point North Carolina. Every year, twice a year, designers pilgrimage to High Point for new product releases, fabrics and furniture, accessories and educational seminars. This actually is "the show" for furniture and fabrics. Due to the overwhelming volume of product at this show, my team and I plan for weeks in advance depending on the goals for our time in North Carolina each season. Many brands and designers debut new furniture lines and use High Point to educate on product construction or uses. We will often spend half our time behind the scenes on private tours or in closed-door sessions with those leading the market.



This photo showcases a traditional look, still popular with clients. Cabinetry by Teddwood Fine Cabinetry, Design and Installation by David Calvani & Sons, David Calvani

... continued on page D14

Coming Soon!



111 Bear Ridge Trail, Orinda

New Listing
8.41 Acre Parcel



Springhill Road, Lafayette

Custom Design



5 Burton Vista Court, Lafayette

Pending



20 Whitfield Court, Pleasant Hill

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539 The Glade, Orinda

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Terri Bates Walker brings an extraordinary professional background to Pacific Union Real Estate. A former practicing real estate attorney with a passion for architecture and design, Terri is one of the area's top producers, representing both sellers and buyers in the communities of Lafayette, Orinda, Moraga and beyond. With every transaction, her goal is to make the process as seamless as possible for her clients while producing exceptional results.

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FIRST OPEN
Sunday, February 28th
1-4pm.

701 Glen Road, Danville



New Listing on the Westside!

This is a rare opportunity to purchase a home on desirable Glen Road in the Westside with a backyard gate directly onto the Iron Horse Trail. Just down the street from Del Amigo Pool and San Ramon Valley High School, this is a four bedroom home of 1,987 sf on a level lot of .32 acres. You'll have the opportunity to create your own vision here as many aspects are original, but with recent updates and repairs, the home is in move-in condition. The hardwood floors throughout the home are in good condition and the home has been painted inside and out. **Offered at \$1,175,000.**



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Stylish Solutions

Discovering New Design Trends “Behind the Drapery”

... continued from page D10



Photo courtesy Ambiente, www.messefrankfurt.com

What's hot? The transitional traditional is still holding court. While I love a contemporary space, at the end of the day, people – no matter how austere in their design aesthetic – still need someplace to sit and sleep. We are seeing fresh takes on traditional, fewer completely dark rooms, and mixed metals and florals are back – in a big

way. There are reprints of classic floral patterns a la the chintz of 1980, albeit with an updated flair, used in moderation, or not, to remind us of softer, gentler living. It's rather nice. I think every room can use a flower or two!

Las Vegas Market. Similar to North Carolina, but on a much smaller scale, the Las Vegas market is packed with furniture, fabric and accessories and is also run in conjunction with the accessories and gift shows. While many in Lamorinda are getting ready for swim meets, my team and I are often headed off to source holiday décor in the dead of summer. It is funny to wholesale Christmas trees, and then fly back for the OMPA, but therein lies the truth behind the drapery for designers.

There are so many more ideas I could share from boutique shows run alongside the majors, where artisanal wares are showcased by the artist themselves, to other national trade shows, but I have learned to edit. For the Lamorinda design-savvy suburbanite, these are our majors. After each show, my team and I gather trend reports for

those who desire a more in-depth experience. For a recap from our travels last year, be sure to read the June 3 article, “What's New in the World of Design” in the Lamorinda Weekly online archives. For this year, we continue to scour the globe to bring you the best available.



Would you like to attend one of our post-trade show trend mornings? We gather professional real estate agents, and other

interested individuals for in-depth presentations, private or group, after each major trade show. Book your office or real estate agent group today. Don't fall behind with outdated design counsel. To learn more, visit www.couturechateau.com/trends

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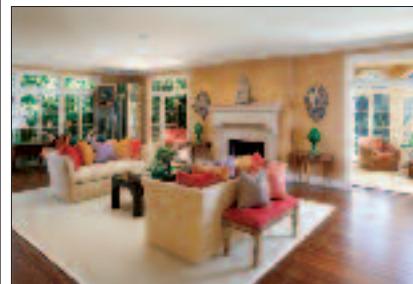
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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

Fence Me In

By Cynthia Brian

“Good fences make good neighbors.” – Robert Frost



A crew builds a fence.

Photos Cynthia Brian

Growing up on a ranch we had all kinds of enclosures. Fences to keep the cattle in, fences to keep the deer out, coops for the chickens, hutches for the rabbits, paddocks for the horses, pens for the sheep, and extra corrals for the injured animals we would rehabilitate before release. What we didn't have were human fences.

While traveling to the East Coast and the southern states, I noticed a lack of fences between homes. Lawns rolled into one another, gardens meandered, play structures appeared to belong to no one or everyone. In the California sierras, the same mentality holds true for many homeowners. But in the cities and suburbs of California, strong fences create good neighbors, especially if you live near a house that reminds you of Miss Havisham's ruined mansion in Charles Dickens' "Great Expectations," albeit with abandoned cars on blocks, rusting washing machines, and a backyard piled



A mangy coyote on the hill.

high with trash. The sturdy redwood fence dividing your properties could be your sanity savior.

Here in our neck of the woods we experience a different kind of problem. Deer! With few predators and plenty of open space deer have been multiplying exponentially. This is not good news for gardeners. Of all the correspondence I receive from readers, the majority of the questions concern these trespassing foragers.

“What can I plant that deer won't eat?”

“How can I keep the deer from breaking my sprinkler systems?”

“What can I do to keep the deer out of my garden?”

Over the years I have written articles about our dear deer and after three decades of trying literally every trick suggested, I am convinced that there is only one answer.

Build a fence!

I decided to call several fencing companies to find out if they have experienced a rise in requests for deer fencing. The answer was a resolute “Yes!” Ryan Collins, the estimator for C & J Fencing, informed me that 95 percent of the calls he had been on in the last month were all related to building deer fencing. Despite the fact that C & J builds custom decks, arbors,

handrails and benches as well as offering ornamental iron and chain link, putting in redwood and galvanized wire deer barriers has become an important part of protecting landscapes.

If you are considering installing a fence, repairing, upgrading or replacing an old one, as a homeowner, what do you really need to know? I interviewed Collins more in depth and also tagged along on an installation. Here are some tips that I gratefully learned through the generosity of C & J as well as through my own observations:

1. Get recommendations from friends, family, or neighbors you trust.
2. Invite two or three legitimate companies to look at your location and bid your job. Ask how long each has been in business. Make sure all are licensed, carry Workman's Comp Insurance, General Liability Insurance, and Auto Insurance.
3. To be fair to all, make sure each estimator is bidding apples for apples. Show each of the contractors exactly where you want the installation. Share your expectations, and your fears, if any. Be clear about how high you want your fence. To keep the deer and coyotes out of your garden, seven feet is the recommendation.

... continued on page D18

Into the Wilder-ness

... continued from page D4

Three fields are completed and in use, and were reserved for a total of 6,166 hours in 2015; two more fields are scheduled to come online shortly. As might be expected, all of the new life and activity in Wilder have brought with them what Mallory calls "growing pains." The empty new streets were quickly discovered by skateboarders, who could not resist the temptation to try them out for an exciting ride. There have been a few incidents of mailbox break-ins and minor vandalism at construction sites because there are not yet a lot of eyes in the valley, she says, and some problems with construction trash and violation of construction hours in the valley. There have also been a few instances of vehicles abandoned on the property that may be related to the easy access afforded by proximity to Highway 24. Residents are working closely with the developer, the Orinda Planning Department and the Orinda Police to address these concerns, and heightened enforcement of permit conditions and stepped-up security measures, such as installation of surveillance cameras, are expected to resolve most of these issues. Others will simply disappear as the construction ends and the valley fills up with new residents.

The Wilder community is settling at a slower pace, with only 16 of the proposed 245 custom homes in the development occupied, and 23 more under construction. How quickly Wilder will build out is anyone's guess. "The market will dictate the velocity of sales," says Perry, but "every sale adds new word of mouth." Vicencio believes it will not take long, perhaps until the end of 2017, because "progress is amazing." Mallory thinks it will take a longer time, maybe five to 10 years. In the meantime, Wilder's pioneering residents are busy building a community by doing the kinds of things pioneers have always done: hosting potluck dinners and throwing progressive Christmas parties to get acquainted, and banding together to address their community issues. In addition, they have done something their historic counterparts did not traditionally do. They hired a concierge to handle all of the duties that title implies in the hospitality world, plus a few others such as coordinating community events.

"We're very pleased to be here, and very fortunate," says Mallory. And while she and her neighbors have Wilder all to themselves, their pioneering lifestyle is unique to Orinda.



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Fence Me In ... continued from page D16



A pear tree in bloom flanked by a blooming camellia.



A magnificent tulip magnolia burst into bloom.

4. Ask and get in writing the materials that will be used. Will the fence be redwood, Douglas fir, pressure treated, metal, chain link, or something else? How deep will the posts be set? (Two feet or more is best.) How much concrete will be used? If using wood, are the posts to be set eight feet on center with 16-foot top rails? Where will gates be placed? Is the wire galvanized welded? Is there an up charge for the longer lasting black or green vinyl coated wire?

5. What is the experience and expertise of the crew

who will handle the job?

6. How soon can the fence be started and completed?

7. Does the company contact the utility companies or is it the obligation of the homeowner to know where pipes, cable, electrical, and gas lines reside? If it is the homeowner's responsibility, call 811 to schedule a free inspection.

8. Is the leftover debris recycled? What happens to it?

9. Is there a warranty and, if so, how long?

10. When is payment due?

Costs vary widely between companies. Most fencing companies quoted an additional \$2 a linear foot for the upgrade to the green or black vinyl coated wire while another company quoted \$5 a linear foot. Some companies offered discount coupons; others were willing to negotiate within reason based on client needs. The key is to know exactly what you want and ask for it. Although a wood and wire fence could last 25 years or longer, warranties for the pressure treated posts and kickboards tended to be 15 years and gates one year. Other than special order items which required a deposit, payment for the structure is due upon completion, according to the companies I interviewed.

Once you have installed a redwood fence, should it be left natural, stained or painted? Collins indicated that this is a personal choice, however, staining or painting will extend the life of the wood because it will be better protected from the elements, especially moisture.

I watched C & J's crew chief, Lopez, with his six man crew as they were unloading trucks, digging post-holes, hauling bags of concrete, cutting wood and erecting the fence. Every person was on his game, non-stop working until the job was finished and the area cleaned



A spectacular white tulip stellata magnolia adds brilliance to the landscape.

and cleared. Depending on the size of the job, a crew consists of two to four men, with a few more usually arriving the first day to unload. Lopez's crew were so impressive that I asked Collins if all of the 12 crews run by C & J were equally as hard working and diligent. He responded that because C & J is a family-run business, each crewmember is hand picked, resulting in a pride of ownership mentality. Many times they hire siblings of a dedicated worker. Lopez, an eight-year veteran of C & J, brought his two brothers on board.

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A crew with a post hole digger.

This information made me realize that asking about the expertise and work ethic of the specific crew assigned to a project is a critical part of hiring the right company for the job. I wondered if some companies were charging higher fees because of El

Nino. (I had heard that roofing companies were known for that practice.) Collins responded that a company with integrity quotes the same fees year-round. Many people believe the misconception that winter is a time when fencing contractors scramble for work, but that is not the case. If you need a fence, do it when you want it. Don't wait.

To help you explore your options, here are four local companies to consider:

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- A & J Fencing
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Cynthia Brian with Ryan Collins, and the crew from C & J

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