

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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*Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian
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Local Lumber Transforms into Great Furniture

By Sophie Braccini



Julie Mitchell, owner of Lafayette Rancho Cantina, sits at a eucalyptus bar.

Photo Sophie Braccini

Many Lamorinda residents have trees on their properties that hold sentimental value: the kids have been climbing them or a treehouse was nestled there at one time. It may be a great redwood, a majestic cedar or a bicentennial walnut.

But time passes for trees, too, and some-

times they have to go. Bill Ridings of Lafayette, owner of California Urban Lumber, makes sure that these old companions are not completely gone, and in the form of a table, a bench, a center kitchen island, he magnifies their beauty and makes sure they continue to draw admiration and warmth into the home.

Ridings is a sawyer, meaning that his gift is to be able to take a piece of lumber and see how to best saw it to extract the most beautiful boards. "Then I have people on my team that will be creative and turn it into furniture," he says. A banker for many years, Ridings comes from at least three generations of talented woodworkers. Then one day in 2007, on a whim, he asked his friend John Connolly if he'd be interested in having him operate his machinery and develop the business. Connolly said yes, and when he retired, Ridings purchased California Urban Lumber.

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*This redwood table top that belongs to Michael and Teresa Gerringer of Lafayette is three inches thick, four feet wide and 16 feet long.
Photo provided*