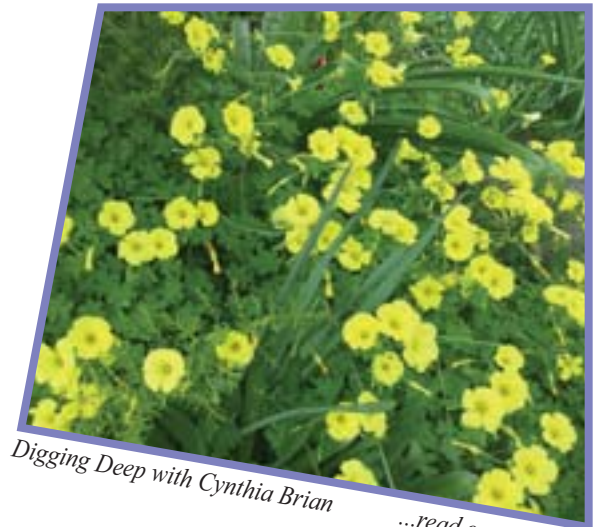


Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 11 Issue 1 Wednesday, March 8, 2017



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

...read on page D13

Create living sculptures with Kokedama

By Kara Navolio



Kokedama in the Japanese art of string gardens.

Photo Kara Navolio

Transforming average house plants into living sculpture was the goal at the recent Kokedama String Garden Workshop held at Orchard Nursery and Florist in Lafayette.

Gardeners from all over the East Bay gathered to learn the art form from Allison Ferry, the indoor plant buyer and designer at Orchard. Kokedama is a style of Japanese Bonsai where the plant's root system is wrapped in sphagnum moss and string, transforming it into a sculptural art form. Loosely translated, koke means moss and dama means ball.

"Kokedama has been around for a long time," Ferry says. "They are created in Japan as a reflection of Wabi-Sabi, an aesthetic which is about leaving things imperfect, natural, unfinished and simple. Wabi-Sabi is the art of finding beauty in imperfection and honoring that. More recently in Norway the idea caught on to hang the Kokedama." Internet sites have propelled its popularity, including sites like Etsy and Pinterest.

Ferry predicts that it will be the next big trend in plants. Orchard's January workshop on Kokedama was so popular that they added the February class to accommodate the demand.

"Kokedama are quite easy to make," Ferry explained. "All you need is the plant, bonsai planting mix, sheet moss and string."

After spreading out the sheet moss, participants were instructed to loosely massage the roots of the plant from their pots until most of the soil had fallen away. The next step is to layer a handful of the bonsai mix, which includes bark, lava rock, sand, and peat moss. After placing the plant and its roots onto the mound, add a little water until you can form a small ball of earth without it breaking apart. Then you begin wrapping the sheet of moss around the whole ball. The last step is to tie the string around the middle of the ball securing it with a knot, then begin wrapping the string around the ball many times, crisscrossing, until the ball is secure.

The whole process takes less than one hour. Some attendees learned how to tie on a second string to be used for hanging the Kokedama, while others elected to place them in bowls or other ornamental vessels. "They make beautiful centerpieces when placed in a decorative bowl," noted Ferry.

... continued on page D4





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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	10	\$745,000	\$2,950,000
MORAGA	3	\$434,000	\$2,750,000
ORINDA	2	\$490,000	\$689,000

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

4147 Canyon Road, \$2,950,000, 4 Bdrms, 3742 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 2-1-17;
Previous Sale: \$665,000, 03-22-96

33 Diablo Circle, \$1,488,000, 3 Bdrms, 2236 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 2-2-17;
Previous Sale: \$350,000, 03-10-94

1414 Eagle Point Court, \$1,750,000, 4 Bdrms, 2998 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 2-9-17;
Previous Sale: \$470,540, 07-07-85

147 Haslemere Court, \$860,000, 3 Bdrms, 2025 SqFt, 1987 YrBlt, 2-1-17;
Previous Sale: \$310,000, 06-30-93

1067 Laurel Drive, \$1,000,000, 3 Bdrms, 1726 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 2-10-17

3279 Mt. Diablo Court #5, \$745,000, 3 Bdrms, 1684 SqFt, 1987 YrBlt, 2-6-17;
Previous Sale: \$701,000, 04-21-15

4021 Natasha Drive, \$2,295,000, 1 Bdrms, 1617 SqFt, 2009 YrBlt, 2-6-17

1390 Reliez Valley Road, \$1,443,000, 4 Bdrms, 2800 SqFt, 1937 YrBlt, 2-10-17;
Previous Sale: \$967,000, 05-21-04

8 Shreve Lane, \$950,000, 4 Bdrms, 1962 SqFt, 2013 YrBlt, 2-6-17

1723 Toyon Road, \$1,292,000, 2 Bdrms, 2100 SqFt, 1931 YrBlt, 2-7-17;
Previous Sale: \$369,000, 11-03-94

MORAGA

2133 Donald Drive #7, \$434,000, 2 Bdrms, 1224 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 2-9-17;
Previous Sale: \$220,000, 05-05-00

1557 Moraga Way, \$650,000, 2 Bdrms, 1635 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 2-2-17;
Previous Sale: \$450,000, 05-02-03

9 Shannon Court, \$2,750,000, 4 Bdrms, 4966 SqFt, 1987 YrBlt, 2-6-17;
Previous Sale: \$2,465,000, 10-06-10

ORINDA

67 Brookwood Road #3, \$490,000, 2 Bdrms, 897 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 2-2-17;
Previous Sale: \$240,000, 05-18-11

3 Buena Vista, \$686,000, 3 Bdrms, 1343 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 2-10-17



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DANVILLE, CA 94523
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Create living sculptures with Kokedama

... continued from page D1



Gaye Thompson of Martinez.

Photo Kara Navolio

The whole process takes less than one hour. Some attendees learned how to tie on a second string to be used for hanging the Kokedama, while others elected to place them in bowls or other ornamental vessels. "They make beautiful centerpieces when placed in a decorative bowl," noted Ferry.

The best plants to use for Kokedama are spider plant, ivy, begonias, succulents, orchids and ferns. However, it can be done with outdoor plants as well, including dwarf lemon trees or dwarf Japanese maples. Just keep in mind that the moss does not like direct sunlight, so plants should be OK with indirect sunlight.

To care for the Kokedama you submerge the moss ball in water for 5-10 minutes. Then it must be moved to a place where it can drip for a while. Most plants require this watering once per week. Once the dripping has ceased, it can be placed in its container or rehung.

Some people like to add twigs and other elements from nature or hang their Kokedama at an angle to add more artistic expression. Hanging multiple Kokedama at different lengths creates an appealing art wall. ... continued on page D8



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Create living sculptures with Kokedama

... continued from page D4

Other items can also be used to wrap the balls like colored yarn or wire for a different look. “I love everything Japanese,” explained participant Gail Reilly of Berkeley. “I’ve been to Japan twice and when I heard about this class I wanted to learn how to do it.”

Recently Ferry put her own creative spin on Kokedama by crafting heart-shaped wire sculptures, stuffing them with the bonsai mix and moss, then adding succulents and beads. The result is a beautiful living sculpture to hang along a window or wall. The possibilities are endless. These heart-shaped creations and other more traditional Kokedama made by Ferry are available at Orchard.

Zahra Tanner of Benicia said, “I saw this class in the newsletter, and it sounded interesting. I’m making my Kokedama for my dad’s birthday. We both like unusual plants.”

Orchard Nursery and Florist has many classes throughout the year. Next up is Forest Terrariums at 2 p.m. on March 11. For more information visit www.orchardnursery.com.



From left: Laurie Hailey and Merrie DeFrene both of Walnut Creek.

Photo Kara Navolio



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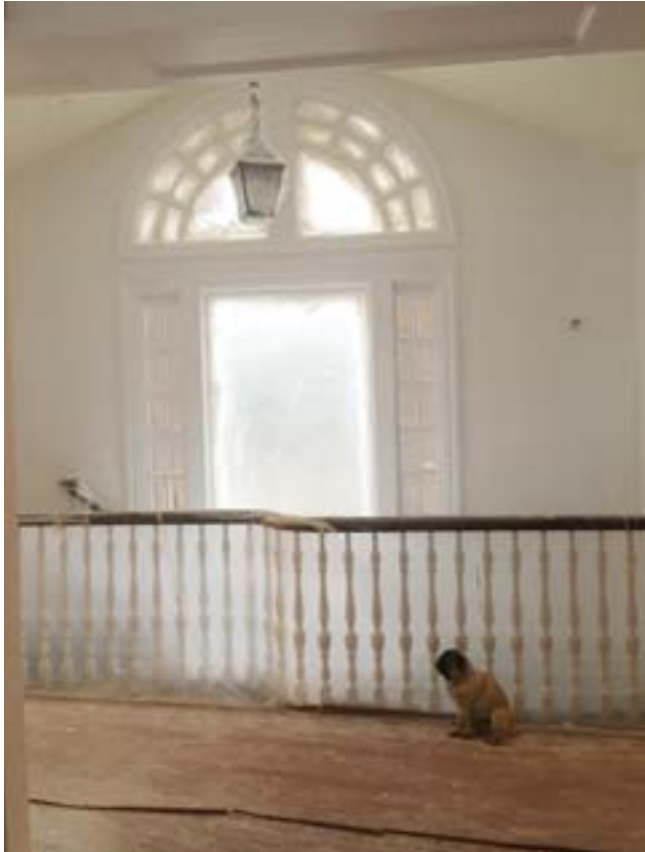


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Stylish Solutions

March Madness: Give your interiors a spring makeover

By Ann McDonald



My home in a work in progress. Notice the smooth walls. They are so much more current. Our timeline is four weeks, based on a rough formula I came up with when we are managing simple interior updates: One week per 1,000 square feet. Our pug Bella is oversees the painters faithfully, each day. She loves to be part of the crew!

Welcome to March! While the sun is peeking through rain clouds, we are tackling an update of inside style this month. Depending on how long you have been in your home, it might be a good idea to look hard at what should stay and what should go.

As a design firm, we advise clients to take a deep look, every 10 to 15 years, at an interior update. For our purposes this month, let's call it a proverbial botox or laser peel.

Minimally invasive, an interior update is certainly more than a simple "teeth cleaning." The interior update can have down time and mess, but should be accomplished in less than a month, if well planned. We typically allocate one week per 1,000 square feet of home.

If your home is 2,000 square feet, plan for a solid two weeks; 4,000 square feet, plan for a month.

My personal recommendation for this type of update is that you plan to work from home to oversee it during this time, or hire a seriously good manager to coordinate this type of project.

While these are surface updates, they must be coordinated and overseen to prevent them from taking over or running off schedule.

Interior updates can range from \$10,000 to \$100,000 depending on the scale and type. For our discussion here: no walls or footprints are modified, no plumbing or electrical is being moved. An interior update like this is mostly about not getting caught wearing the 1970s polyester pantsuit when it's 2017.

What does this involve and why do it, even if you are planning to stay in your home another 50 years?

Sometimes we simply don't see what our home actually looks like. We've looked at the drapery so long, and paid so much for it years ago, we miss that it is in-

credibly outdated, even for a traditionalist.

Design is not a one-and-done type thing. Many homeowners think it is. It's not. Drapery has a life span. Tile backsplash has a life span. Even custom cabinets, have a life span.

Historic styles once considered sacred still need updates. Consider LED lighting or better water flow with a newer faucet. You source appropriate style-sensitive suppliers of course, and good places to start include appliances and windows that will reduce your electric or water bill.

Essentially we take a good hard look stylistically at what would better serve your lifestyle, especially financially. I know historic homes can turn into money pits, so let's do what we can with what we have access to.

For other homes, ask yourself, do our cabinets bang a bit? Do our windows open easily?

... continued on page D12

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110 Cora Court
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114 Cora Court is an adjacent .38 acre lot
Offered at \$400,000

Stylish Solutions

Give your interiors a March Makeover

... continued from page D12

Is the granite on our kitchen counters from 15 years ago? If so, consider those items to be on the list.

A great way to see what you seek is to peruse some of the Open Houses this next weekend. Ask yourself if you can see what has been updated versus what has not. Practice looking differently, at different price points.

Look and take note of tile. Look and take note of light fixtures and finishes. Look and take note of carpets. Then, go back to your own home and try to identify some of the items in your own home that need to be updated.

The first two things to consider which make, in my professional opinion, the biggest difference:

1) Wall texture and color. Are your walls in need of a “skim coat”? Perhaps you’ve never even noticed your wall texture before. Once you start to observe, you’ll become a resident expert and start to see how wall texture greatly affects the style of a space. Paint can cover a multitude of design sins, but it cannot ever make up for a dated texture.

After you get the texture right, paint. Colors do more than trend, as paint has come a long way in the past 10 years. The change in color is just the start. With better quality, you can update the inside of your home quickly.

I always recommend professional painters, as it is a true skill set. If you are budget conscious in this area, you may be able to help with some of the prep or furniture moving, but please leave the painting to the ones who do it 40-plus hours a week.

When we remodeled our home 10 years ago, we opted for a smooth texture everywhere except in the living and dining room, which we covered in a heavy antique texture. In our current spring clean, we had the entire area changed to a beautiful smooth coat. The new paint sings on the walls. I feel happy every time I walk in!

What rooms will you change?

Most painting contractors can handle the texture change, and will charge by the square foot. Be prepared, it can be messy, but oh so worth it! Look at the photos on page D10 to see progress in our home.

2) Lighting fixture updates. The other area we are updating is lighting fixtures. For a relatively inexpensive amount, you can update your look. The budget for lighting fixtures can be \$100 to \$300 per fixture on the low end, up to \$500 or more per fixture on the medium to high end. Certainly the sky’s the limit, but with the advent of Amazon Prime and other shopping sites, we can now source many brands online that were off limits to the consumer just five years ago via the design trade.

Next month we will be tackling the balance of the project and I will share photos of our progress again. I allotted four weeks to complete the entire project, and even with the rain, we are right on schedule.

Granted, this is what I do for a living, but even with careful planning, some things can be on back order. My team and I spent one week with a deep plan, and had three rooms as contingencies, meaning, if we ran over budget, we’d hold off on those rooms. I will let you know how it goes!



Ann McDonald, IIDA, NAPO, is the Founder/CEO of Couture Chateau, a luxury interior design firm in Orinda. For a complete blog post including other design ideas, visit www.couturechateau.com/blog.



March Gardening Guide

Go Gaelic green in the garden

By Cynthia Brian

“May the road rise up to meet you, may the wind be ever at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face, and the rain fall softly on your fields.” — Irish Blessing



The bright white blossoms of a flowering pear tree.

Photos Cynthia Brian



A close up of the Peace Lily.



Red-veined dock, part of the Rumex genus, is an edible lemony-tasting sorrel.

Although I don't have an ounce of Irish in me, every March I get excited to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. Besides the fact that the beloved rebirth of nature is officially only days away, my adoration of the Emerald Isle is deep-rooted. My good fortune as a child was to be taught for eight full years by dedicated, intelligent Irish nuns, and to be mentored by Irish priests who had my best interests at heart. I danced throughout California in an Irish dance troop and one of my best friends in the world is my Irish pen pal, whom I met through letters crossing the Atlantic at the age of eight. My Irish first-grade teacher and I are still in constant correspondence. She always told me she kept a leprechaun in her pocket just in case she needed a trick or two. Fortunately I've been blessed to spend many weeks with these friends in their very green country where I've been officially christened an "honorary Irish woman."

With the propensity of rain that we've enjoyed this past winter, our countryside is looking very much like the verdant island. As I look at the cattle grazing on the hill, I am reminded of my friend's dairy farm in Limerick where the rich milk goes to produce Bailey's Irish Cream. I milked those cows when I visited and was rewarded by a shower of hot manure on my hair. That was many years ago, but I'll never forget the smell... and the laughter.

Since that time, I have always grown shamrocks, which here in America we call oxalis, a noxious weed. Nevertheless, I have a major fondness for the bright yellow or pink flowers of these shamrocks as I seek the rare four-leaf clover pattern. For each petal on the shamrock a wish of good health, good luck, and eternal happiness are bestowed. I'll take all of the blessings and positive thoughts offered! If you are not a fan of shamrocks, plant baby tears in a shaded garden. They, too, are reminiscent of the Celtic spirit.

The good news is that spring is coming and with it an abundance of flowers and beauty. All you have to do is look around to witness the beautiful blossoms on pear and peach trees. My plums have already finished blooming and are leafing out. Rose bushes are budding. My calla lilies, daffodils, crocosimias, hyacinths and tulips are abloom, spreading their joy and fragrance throughout the landscape.

It's time to pull the weeds, prepare the soil, and get ready for a wonderful season of seeding and sowing.

May the luck of the Irish be with you!

Cynthia Brian's Garden Guide for March

CUT budding branches from fruit trees to place in a vase to watch the petals open. Add a few drops of bleach to the water to prolong the blooms. A few sprigs of narcissus provide perfume to an entire room.

USE baby tears as a ground cover in shaded areas as a pretty green carpet.

CUT calla lilies to be used indoors in a vase. They will last two or more weeks as long as you replace the water regularly and add a drop of bleach or lemon juice to the water.

INVITE the wood nymphs, faeries, and leprechauns into your garden to help you with your chores by providing hiding places for these wee ones.

CLEANSE your indoor air with a container of peace lilies, also known as the sail plant.

FORAGE for wild greens including Miner's lettuce, mustard, creek watercress and wild strawberries. The young leaves are delicious in salads.

PULL weeds as soon as the rains terminate. Leave weeds on hillsides to prevent erosion until the end of next month.

PREPARE your soil for next month's planting by mixing your compost into the topsoil. Don't rototill unless you are creating a new garden bed as you don't want to disturb the existing ecosystem that surely contains many worms.

FERTILIZE lawns, trees and annuals with a high-nitrogen organic fertilizer. It's best to fertilize your lawns when you know it's going to rain to assure a deep feeding. The winter rains have definitely stripped our soil of nutrients making it necessary to boost the nutrition now. Remember to mow without the bag as the lawn cuttings are rich in nourishment for the grass.

TIME to reseed or sod lawns. My preferred grass seeds are purchased from Pearl's Premium. www.PearlsPremium.com. I also really like mixing in clover as it is self-fertilizing and always green. You do have to like having tiny white or pink flowers in your grass.

NET areas where you are seeding, both in gardens or grass. The birds will be voracious eaters if you don't protect your seedlings.

WEAR green on March 17 and pin a clover on your collar or the banshees will be coming for you.

BUY packets of seeds for vegetables, vines, herbs and flowers from companies you trust. Look for heirloom varieties and non-GMO. There are many companies to choose from including Renee's Garden, Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds, Plant Delights Nursery, White Flower Farm, Select Seeds and many others.

CONTINUE to collect fallen camellias until the end of the blooming season. Do not let the dying or dead flowers remain on the ground or you'll jeopardize the mother plant.

PRE-ORDER my forthcoming garden book, "Growing with the Goddess Gardener," Book I in the Garden Shorts Series. All pre-orders will receive extra goodies such as heirloom seeds, bookmarks and more. Email me for details, Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com. Twenty-five percent of the proceeds benefit the 501c3 Be the Star You Are! charity.

RELEASE your perfection attitude in the garden. Take your cues from the chaos that is nature. Let it go and let it grow!

SING a lullaby, dream of castles, kiss the Blarney Stone, and celebrate the vernal equinox with an Irish jig.

CONGRATULATIONS to Andy and Wendy Scheck for 10 years of stellar publishing of the Lamorinda Weekly. I am honored and grateful to be a part of this elite writing team. Our community is better because of this newspaper. Thank you!



The bright blooms of crocosimias.



Raised beds with edible greens and lettuces.



A bed of Baby Tears.



Cynthia Brian

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Cynthia Brian, The Goddess Gardener, is a New York Times best selling author, actor, radio personality, speaker, media and writing coach as well as the Founder and Executive Director of Be the Star You Are1® 501 c3.

Tune into Cynthia's Radio show at www.StarStyleRadio.net

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ORINDA



New Listing

31 Paintbrush Lane Beyond your "Wilder" dreams! .53 acre lot with views plus approved plans for a new 4,500-5,000 sq. ft. Swatt-Miers designed home. The hard work is done, get ready to build!

\$1,150,000

ORINDA



New Listing

5 La Sombra Court Charming East Coast style 2191 square foot home with 5 bedrooms, 2 baths on level half acre, small friendly court!

\$1,299,000

ORINDA



New Listing

220 Camino Sobrante Very special location on lake near town, commute, BART & Orinda Country Club. 4bd/4ba home with great layout for enjoying comfortable living & entertaining. Alluring, beautiful lot with sports court.

\$1,650,000

ORINDA



New Listing

109 Van Ripper Lane Don't miss this exquisitely remodeled 4bd/3ba single level Sleepy Hollow gem! Hardwood floors, stainless appliances and incredible master suite are just a few highlights. Come See!

\$1,975,000

ORINDA



36 El Patio 1st time on market in 50 years! Fabulous 5 bdrm estate home in heart of country club w/ gourmet kitchen/ family room, formal dining +detached guest cottage. Hdwd flrs, French drs, lovely grounds w/ adjacent vacant lot.

\$2,498,000

ORINDA



New Listing

23 Via Hermosa Exceptional craftsmanship of unparalleled quality join together in a breathtaking setting. 5-star resort atmosphere with yard, terraces, infinity pool & spa + forever views across valley to Mt. Diablo.

\$2,950,000

MORAGA



Coming Soon

392 Springfield Place Updated 2,374 sq.ft. 2 story traditional on a .227 acre corner lot - 4+bd/2.5ba w/hardwood floors, kitchen/family rm combo overlooking level yard. Close to award winning K-8 schools, hiking trails.

Call for Price

LAFAYETTE



New Listing

918A Dewing Avenue Lovely cottage style townhome with 2 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, apx. 1245 sq. ft., high ceiling, detached garage. Excellent location, close to downtown Lafayette, BART. Top schools!

\$675,000

LAFAYETTE



3333 Hamlin Road Super opportunity on almost 20 acres. One of the last big parcels of land in Lafayette to develop. Truly a rare find of magnificent allure of beauty & close-in trail are appeal.

\$2,500,000

LAFAYETTE



1204 Glen Road Stunning new construction by SpringHill Homes boasts 4225 sf of exceptional open living spaces & beautifully landscaped level backyard on 2.06 acres with views in sought after Happy Valley Glen.

\$3,650,000

EL CERRITO



New Listing

2425 Mira Vista Drive Enjoy incredible views of the Golden Gate Bridge from this updated 1965 sq. ft. home with an open floor plan, 3 bedrooms, 2 baths, a bonus room downstairs and a Bocce ball court!

\$799,000

ROSSMOOR



1908 Golden Rain #2 New Rossmoor Beauty! Updated and expanded 1325 square foot 2 bedroom, 2 bath Yosemite model. Level-in, light and bright end unit!

\$475,000

WALNUT CREEK



New Listing

114 Cora Court Flat .38 acre lot with incredible park-like setting in lovely neighborhood. Close to BART, freeway, shopping, Trail. Also, for sale separately is 110 Cora Court which is a 3+bd/2.5ba on .50 acre lot.

\$400,000

WALNUT CREEK



New Listing

1827 Holland Drive Beautiful 2 story townhome conveniently located near freeways, BART, & shopping. New paint, newer carpet, updated kitchen, indoor laundry, attached 2 car garage, 2 private patios.

\$559,000

WALNUT CREEK



Back on Market

215 Grover Lane Top location in desirable South Walnut Creek! Spacious 4bd/2ba rancher w/1928sf on a .44 acre lot w/privacy near end of cul-de-sac. Vaulted ceilings, kitchen/ family combo. Close to BART, top schools.

\$849,000

WALNUT CREEK



New Listing

110 Cora Court Beautiful 3+bd/2.5ba home including Au Pair on .50 acre. Also, for sale separately is 114 Cora Ct which is a flat .38 acre lot. Acalanes School District.

\$1,200,000

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