

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 11 Issue 3 Wednesday, April 5, 2017



April Gardening Guide with Cynthia Brian ...read on page D12

Changing your garden, changing your life

By Sophie Braccini



Kay Countryman and Ron Briggs



Photos Sophie Braccini Robert Sorenson

Every year, the Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour features new and mature gardens composed mostly of native plants. The three Lamorinda gardens featured here — and which will be on the tour — are each so different from each other, but all testify of how gardening practices have shaped not only the landscape but also the lives of the gardeners.

Over several decades Orinda's Robert Sorenson has restored the wild native habitat on his very large property that extends on both sides of a creek; Kay Countryman and Ron Briggs replaced the lawn in their medium size backyard three years ago with natives, working with a landscape architect; while Tré Fran has transformed a relatively small front-

yard into an intricate kingdom for tens of different natives. Each of these residents came from a different background but with a similar quest for beauty and authenticity. They all say that the experience they have in their garden is enriching their lives.

Sorenson embarked on the restoration of his one-acre property years ago. The front of the Orinda house already sets the tone with native grasses under the trees, and the voyage in nature continues in the back. It is somewhat of a little expedition to explore the whole property. Sorenson has built stairs and bridges to access both sides of the creek with recycled woods and there are no guardrails of any type. But the hiking effort is totally worthwhile.

There, people will not only discover Califor-

nia natives, they will be exposed to an area that has been entirely restored to its original flora. Sorenson removed all the invasive and nonnative plants and went on a hunt for plants from the local watershed. Collecting seeds in nearby parks and buying small plants in specialized nurseries, he worked tirelessly to create a sustainable space of beauty. There are literally hundreds of native plants to be discovered on that land.

Sorenson is a Berkeley optometrist who says that gardening is his way of balancing his life. He feels that he is a student of nature, and that even if he has researched plants for years there is still so much for him to learn. He also loves to experiment and propagate.

... continued on page D4



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City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	7	\$525,000	\$2,399,000
MORAGA	9	\$484,000	\$2,000,000
ORINDA	7	\$960,000	\$3,150,000

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

- 18 Juniper Drive, \$858,000, 3 Bdrms, 1683 SqFt, 1976 YrBlt, 3-8-17;
Previous Sale: \$525,000, 01-17-03
- 1556 Rancho View Road, \$2,399,000, 4 Bdrms, 3246 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 3-8-17;
Previous Sale: \$1,836,000, 10-11-16
- 3100 Sandalwood Court, \$1,083,000, 4 Bdrms, 1783 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 3-10-17
- 590 Silverado Drive, \$1,385,000, 3 Bdrms, 2012 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 3-8-17;
Previous Sale: \$950,000, 12-03-12
- 3375 South Lucille Lane, \$860,000, 3 Bdrms, 1464 SqFt, 1977 YrBlt, 3-13-17
- 3711 West Road, \$525,000, 1 Bdrms, 832 SqFt, 1977 YrBlt, 2-28-17;
Previous Sale: \$425,000, 11-01-06
- 1003 Woodbury Road #202, \$860,000, 2 Bdrms, 1110 SqFt, 2015 YrBlt, 3-10-17

MORAGA

- 1976 Ascot Drive, \$484,000, 2 Bdrms, 1234 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 3-8-17;
Previous Sale: \$129,500, 04-19-90
- 2059 Ascot Drive #211, \$463,000, 2 Bdrms, 1193 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 2-27-17;
Previous Sale: \$289,000, 08-13-10
- 789 Augusta Drive, \$1,435,000, 5 Bdrms, 2992 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 3-7-17;
Previous Sale: \$1,020,000, 07-28-03
- 3 Crockett Drive, \$2,000,000, 5 Bdrms, 3730 SqFt, 1987 YrBlt, 2-28-17;
Previous Sale: \$780,000, 08-15-96
- 140 Donald Drive, \$1,010,000, 3 Bdrms, 1431 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 3-10-17
- 120 Draeger Drive, \$1,220,000, 3 Bdrms, 1624 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 3-10-17;
Previous Sale: \$905,000, 07-24-08
- 48 Sullivan Drive, \$1,440,000, 3 Bdrms, 1819 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 3-10-17;
Previous Sale: \$655,000, 06-14-00
- 415 Tharp Drive, \$1,300,000, 4 Bdrms, 2284 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 3-2-17;
Previous Sale: \$1,185,000, 06-16-15
- 145 Westchester Street, \$740,000, 2 Bdrms, 1743 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 3-1-17

ORINDA

- 14 Charles Hill Circle, \$960,000, 3 Bdrms, 2011 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 2-27-17
- 98 Estates Drive, \$1,506,000, 4 Bdrms, 2141 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 3-8-17
- 59 La Espiral, \$1,345,000, 3 Bdrms, 2564 SqFt, 1947 YrBlt, 3-7-17;
Previous Sale: \$1,325,000, 03-08-07
- 36 Las Vegas Road, \$3,150,000, 5 Bdrms, 3941 SqFt, 2015 YrBlt, 3-1-17;
Previous Sale: \$846,000, 12-24-15
- 46 Muth Drive, \$1,210,000, 3 Bdrms, 1372 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 3-2-17;
Previous Sale: \$658,000, 01-25-11
- 131 Oak Road, \$1,746,000, 4 Bdrms, 3700 SqFt, 2006 YrBlt, 3-10-17;
Previous Sale: \$540,000, 11-01-05
- 68 Persimmon Walk, \$1,320,000, 4 Bdrms, 2394 SqFt, 2014 YrBlt, 3-9-17

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Changing your garden, changing your life

... continued from page D1



Photo Sophie Braccini

During the tour, several speeches and a concert will take place in the beautiful garden.

Tré Frane's garden is also the result of a lifelong quest. The plant physiologist studied the functioning of plants and was a technology teacher at Glorietta Elementary School for years. She knows her plants and loves to experiment in her garden. The relatively small front yard opened during the tour is a treasure trove for anyone interested in natives. Frane says that more than 50 different species are represented. Over the years she has cultivated over 100 different plants. She observes them, but if she notices that they do not thrive in her garden, she lets them go.

Almost every morning when the weather is right, she comes to her sitting rock in the garden with a cup of coffee, enjoys the beauty, notices the changes and observes the natural life that thrives in her garden.

During the tour where she'll be featured for the first time, she plans to be there along friends who have volunteered to help and she will answer questions. She will show off her three different varieties of poppies, wild gingers, yarrows, different buckwheats, irises, dogwoods and so many more. Alexandra Ashton, the landscape architect who worked with her to reshape her garden and who proposed new plants, will also be there.

... continued on page D13



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Leave space for who you will become

By Ann McDonald



Color has a huge impact on our lives. If the thought of a complete removal or overhaul is daunting, consider using simple, smaller elements. We see side table/stool, pillows, artwork, and even a bench used here. Practice in children's rooms or family rooms to ease yourself in. Photos provided

How are you, Lamorindans? My heart hopes well. This spring has been such a precious time in Lamorinda, all the rains bringing blooms before their time. I am loving it.

This is my last regular column for our beloved Lamorinda Weekly as my team and I are transitioning into other design work, most notably, diving deeper into manufacturing for our Bespoke Holiday Collection as well as expanding our library of online Design and Decorating classes. For more information, you may visit www.couturechateau.com.

For now, know I have reached out to a dear designer to who will take precious care of this column space in the months to come.

In transition, I felt like sharing the most important piece about designing your home spaces, from almost 30 years on the front lines of true luxury design.

If you were a longtime client, you and I would have shared many discussions around this topic. It feels so close to the heart, and yet many miss it. Because you are wise enough to live and thrive in Lamorinda, I'm certain this will resonate with you.

1) Your designed home should be a place you BECOME, not a place you store.

Let me explain by way of an exaggerated example:

One of the keys to successful luxury design is movement. To move, there must be

empty space. What is missing is as important as what is included. We are constantly designing with an eye to a future incarnation and legacy, of an individual, family, community or business.

Imagine if we did interior design for a business and installed antique dial up land line phones, instead of Wi-Fi. What sounds preposterous for a business is often de rigeur for home design.

Think about it: We reach the stage where we can afford to decorate or reconstruct, and the first thing we do is pull out our magazines of dream rooms past. Proverbially, we are installing landlines in the forms of sofas, pictures, accomplishments.

We pile up memories and have them framed. We line our halls and shelves with what happened, and rarely leave empty space for what will.

One of the exercises I recently had a client walk through, and then did myself (ouch!), was to go through their home and tag everything that was given, inherited or chosen for them by someone else. Then we tagged everything that was centered around a memory older than seven years.

Do you know what was left? Very little.

And here's the kicker: It's a stunning home! Spectacular inherited pieces, museum-worthy art, blue and white for miles, gorgeous framed art from children, photos from precious trips. However, very little was directly a result of the homeowner's true heart for what was ahead in their life.

Without even thinking, they had become a "luxury store house" with no room for movement.

A strong example to be sure, but one worth recalling when we put our homes together.

... continued on page D10



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... continued from page D8

2) You have something brilliant to bring to the next season of life in Lamorinda, and how you design your home will tell me a great deal about what part you will contribute.

It's okay to have some antiques, and old photos, but begin to think objectively when it comes to creating a space to move you forward.

This can be hard. It's OK to cry. It's even OK to fail! It's even OK to rent storage space. But if we want to keep growing and becoming something other than a memory, we must embrace the process. Many of you know from last month's article, I was moved to redecorate after my own experience doing the same, and I'm in the business! I'm the professional. Aren't we glad we're all human?

To go forward in your design, embrace your home as process, and ask yourself questions:

- Is my space ready for the next? Is there any empty space?
- Will this home handle where I want to go? Where my Lamorinda family is hoping to be in one, three, or even five years?

My client and I decided upon a 30 percent rule. Thirty percent or roughly one third of the things from the past could remain, but they did so only on rotation. There had to be new art, new photos, empty spaces...where the next incarnation of life would have space to reside.

3. "Blessing comes when it has space to reside" - Ann

Some of my past articles deal with these nuances, and I encourage you to read them. I really feel like Lamorinda is one of the most precious places in all the Earth. Let's cherish our homes and design them with an eye towards refreshing the future, and making all things possible.

In closing, it has been an absolute pleasure to write this column monthly. I love being a part of your home story. For now, blessings and best from my design heart to yours!

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.



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Create spaces for the next season. Leave some areas undone, so the next piece of your journey can find its way in.

Designer Clearance

As one last hurrah, we are hosting a Designer Clearance Sale on Friday, April 21 and Saturday, April 22 at 5 Tappan Lane, Orinda. I have engaged a professional Estate Sale Company to handle the inventory sale, as there is simply too much for my team and me to manage. We are clearing out our fabric warehouses as we transition into more holiday production, and have tremendous inventory of fabric, accessories, smalls, table top and more to sell.

You may find more information on the sale at www.couturechateau.com/sale2017. Please make sure to be on the email list for updates and times.

We look forward to seeing you then!



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April Gardening Guide

The Art of Growing Grass

By Cynthia Brian

“Now every field is clothed with grass, and every tree with leaves; now the woods put forth their blossoms, and the year assumes its gay attire.” ~Virgil

Yes, California passed Proposition 64 last November. However, this column is not about cultivating marijuana, although I am writing about the glories of grass.

Spring is spectacular with its wardrobe of rainbow blooms. Trees are covered with blossoms, the fragrance of freesia engages our nostrils, and the ubiquitous beauty surrounding us is awe-inspiring. We are so blessed that Mother Nature celebrates the rebirth of the seasons with a grand April entrance.

Because of the warmer soil, fall is the best time to plant or reseed a lawn, yet spring runs a close second in popularity. If you haven't torn out your swath of grass in the past few years during our dreadful drought, no doubt you are now looking at a runway of green in your yard thanks to the months of rain. To manage your efforts maintaining the health, beauty and benefits of your lawn for the remainder of the year, get started this month with simple best practices.

Tips to Growing a Lush, Green, Sustainable Turf

- Decide if you want to seed, sod or reseed. Seeding for the first time is best done in autumn when the soil is warm as germination is swifter. You can successfully reseed, overseed and sod in spring, including those irksome bare patches.

- Whichever you choose, your first consideration is to properly prepare your soil. Check the PH level. Ideally lawns should be in the six to seven range. If lower than six, add lime; if higher than seven, add sulfur to bring the PH down.

- Pull the weeds. If you have lots of weeds, keep in mind that weeds mean that the soil conditions are imbalanced. Weeds provide homes and food for microbes but your soil must be improved before your new sod or grass seeds will thrive. Many “weeds” are actually gourmet dinner or tea ingredients including plantain, dandelion, creeping Charlie, mint, mustard, lambs quarter and more.

- Order several yards of enriched soil and compost to be delivered. Ask the yard experts what is their best soil for improving your lawn. Soil is the foundation.

- Add organic fertilizer to accelerate deeper rooting.

- Aerate to loosen the soil. A core aerator will punch holes in the ground to bring air and water to the roots. The finger plugs are to be left on the surface to naturally decompose. Less compaction equals better drainage and absorption.

- Consult your favorite nursery professional for a recommendation on the best seed combinations for you. I'm a huge fan of mixed growth lawns for year around enjoyment. I reseed with Pearl's Premium (www.PearlsPremium.com) interspersed with plugs of isotoma (blue star creeper) and white and red clover. Together they make a very attractive natural rug and the clover is a natural nitrogen supplier. Some people enjoy lawns laced with wild strawberry, violets, mint, or even planted with bulbs.

- You may have to cover reseeded areas with netting to keep the birds away. For small areas, discarded window or door screens work well.

- Let the rainfall do the watering to get your grass established. If it's later in the season when the rain has stopped, water deeply in the morning twice a week or as needed.

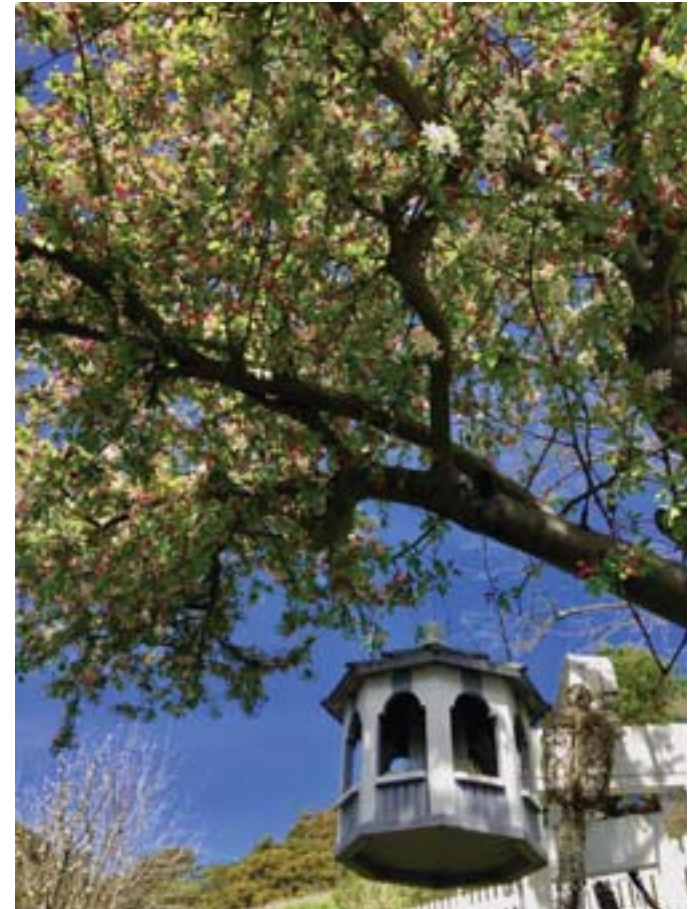
- Mow your lawns with a sharp blade on a high setting without the bag allowing the cut grass to remain on the lawn. This is called grasscycling and is the most beneficial component of cultivating a lush, deep green, thick healthy lawn. If you are buying a new mower, buy a mulch mower, which will chop the grass. Grasscycling allows the clippings to be the fertilizer that provides nutrients to your grass. Scientific research indicates that the content of typical grass clippings by weight is nitrogen (N) 4 percent, potassium (P) 2 percent, and phosphorous (K) .5 percent. By recycling your grass clippings back to your lawn, you use 25 percent less additional fertilizer.

- Mulch the reseeded areas to create a strong turf.

- Stay off the grass while it's growing!

- For those of you who are “Ex-lawn Rangers,” you can create an inviting mosaic with massed groundcovers and low growers including dicentra, ajuga, creeping thyme, golden creeping Jenny, dwarf cinquefoil, or even sedum. You'll need to clip, snip, and maintain. Most groundcovers are not foot-traffic friendly.

... continued on page D14



A birdfeeder anchors a flowering crabapple tree.

Photos Cynthia Brian



Blue star grass amidst the fallen petals of peach blossoms.

Changing your garden, changing your life

... continued from page D4



Photo Sophie Braccini

In their Lafayette home Kay Countryman and Ron Briggs will also showcase their garden for the first time. The backyard used to be a lawn that year after year absorbed an increasing water — and financial — budget. Countryman had been going to the Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour for years and really liked a garden a friend of hers had done. Roxy Klein was the architect and she and her husband decided to work with her.

Klein designed the garden and established the plant list, creating spaces and areas in the garden that gave the couple a feeling of space they had never had before. The garden was completed two years ago and the couple soon noted that it had consequences on their lives they had not expected.

Not only was their water cut by 66 percent, but the new landscape created a new experience for them. They say that it is as if the garden suddenly became alive. They felt that it was drawing them outside; they noticed that they were spending much more time in the garden, feeling grounded and happy. There they observe the wildlife coming back, the change of seasons, the beauty and variety of the environment. Briggs said that he would never have guessed how much the new garden would mean for his well-being.

The Tour

The Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour is on Sunday, May 7. It is free and self-guided. This year, for the first time, participants can choose between receiving a free PDF of the 80 page garden guide or paying \$10 for the printed guide. More information at www.bringingbackthenatives.net. There are 39 gardens on the tour, eight from Lamorinda, and several nurseries, including some that rarely open their gates to the public.

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The Art of Growing Grass

... continued from page D12

Benefits of Maintaining a Lawn

Although many people tend to discourage lawns in landscapes as a water conservation method, I am a firm believer that the humble grass shoot offers benefits to our health and wellbeing. Besides the fact that children and animals enjoy a safe, comfortable place to tumble and toss, lawns contribute to better air quality by trapping dust and smoke particles while cooling the air from the ground up.

Our environments are made more habitable by the generation of oxygen absorbing the pollutants of carbon and sulfur dioxide. Lawns clean the air we breathe. Erosion is controlled because water can't carve deep recesses in a thickly planted lawn. Water filters through turf grass making our ground waters safer and cleaner for the environment. A patch of green soothes the eye when viewing a landscape, offering a resting space between the color explosions of flowers and shrubs. Lawns offer a buffer zone in fire prevention. Several years ago when one of the biggest wild fires in our national history hit the forests of Northern California, our family cabin's grassy meadow became the safe zone for dozens of firefighters from around the country. That lawn literally saved lives and the forest from the raging blaze.

Prepare your grass for healthy growing this spring, and get ready for the fun-filled days of croquet, ball games, picnics, sprinkler baths, or just staring up at the clouds.

Remember that maintaining your lawn enhances the environment, improves your health, and optimizes your enjoyment of the great outdoors. And that's great grass!



A close up look at clover as a lawn substitute.



Pearl's Premium lawn two days after mowing.

Cynthia Brian's Goddess Gardener Tips for April

BEWARE of ticks. Check your body, hair, and clothing after gardening. On a rainy day in mid March when I was covered head to toe in clothing, a tick bit me on my neck. The golf ball size lump is still painful.

TURN houseplants a quarter round every week to give adequate amount of sunlight to all parts.

BAIT for snails and slugs.

VISIT the Wagner Ranch Wildlife Festival on Sunday, April 23 for free family fun. There will be honeybees, goats, turtles, birds, garden activities, food, music, nature tours, arts and crafts. 350 Camino Pablo Rd. at Bear Creek Road in Orinda. <https://fwrna.org/wildlifefest/>

PERUSE FLOWER PHOTOGRAPHY. Award winning photographer Anne Morrison Rabe's Spring Flowers exhibit is showcased now at home/made Kitchen & Bakery, 337 Rheem Boulevard in Moraga. Almost all of Anne's photographs were shot with an iPhone. Eat, drink, and enjoy the art. www.Amr-Photography.com

PREORDER 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. A quarter of the proceeds benefit the 501c3 Be the Star You Are! charity.

WIN \$50,000 FOR YOUR GARDEN: As a judge in America's Best Gardener Contest. I encourage you to enter to win \$50,000. Show the world that your thumb is the greenest by showing the world pictures of your garden today! www.americasbestgardener.com



Western red bud is a gorgeous native tree with deep pink/purple blooms.



Visit home/made Kitchen & Bakery for creative digital floral photography by Anne Rabe.



Cynthia Brian in the garden.

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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 Are!® 501 c3.

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

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260 Camino Sobrante

Great location at Lake Cascade near club house & tennis courts. Vaulted ceilings, custom features, modern kitchen. Lower floor in-law with bath & own entrance. Walk to club/ town.

\$1,145,000

ORINDA



41 Longridge Road

Very special home of great style, design & flair. Light and bright rooms. Ideal setting close to town + spectacular views from patios and terraces off most rooms.

\$1,150,000

ORINDA



31 Paintbrush Lane

Beyond your Wilder dreams! .53 acre lot w/ approved plans for a 4,500-5,000 sq. ft. contemporary masterpiece by Swatt-Miers. Premium cul-de-sac location w/ views and HOA amenities.

\$1,150,000

ORINDA



176 Camino Don Miguel

New to market! Magnificent custom built classic traditional 3 bedroom, 3.5 bath home located on the 5th fairway of Orinda Country Club.

\$2,350,000

ORINDA



572 Dalewood Drive

Stunning executive 5bd/4.5ba, apx. 5211sf home in Orinda Downs. High ceilings & hwd flrs; large family room & rec/game room opens to deck with outdoor kitchen & gazebo with views.

\$2,350,000

ORINDA



3 Gardiner Court

Fabulous 5156sf executive retreat nestled on gorgeous 1.2 acre w/sparkling pool, sport court, lawns, & views. Kitchen adjoining family room w/French doors open to veranda. Luxurious master suite.

\$2,950,000

ORINDA



160 Camino Don Miguel

One of a kind estate overlooking OCC. Rebuilt from the ground up in 1996 by the finest craftsmen to preserve the original elements of the home. Resort quality pool & spa, gardens, views & guest house.

\$4,950,000

MORAGA



67 Corte Yolanda

Great single level home in Campolindo. Three bedrooms, two baths, updated kitchen, hardwood floors. Close to school, shopping and transportation.

\$1,195,000

MORAGA



Complete home remodel in desirable Corliss area. New kitchen, wood floors, 4 bedrooms, 2.5 remodeled baths, a large flat lot and plenty more updates.

\$1,465,000

LAFAYETTE



Beautiful, modern, new-construction home in convenient Lafayette location, +great schools. Spacious layout, 2027sf, with 4 beds & 3 baths. Ten-foot ceilings give this home an open & welcoming feel.

\$1,750,000

LAFAYETTE



Desirable Happy Valley mid-century modern on 1.08ac. Fred & Lois Langhorst design reportedly. Fred Langhorst, Frank Lloyd Wright's apprentice 4yrs w/William Wurster. Stunning glass walls, high clerestories.

\$1,780,000

LAFAYETTE



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.

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DANVILLE



Danville estate home located at the end of a landmark Colonial street! 5 bedroom, 4 & 1/2 bathroom, apx. 5600 sq. ft. home on 1/3 acre park-like yard with pool, pond, BBQ, fireplace & more!

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OAKLAND



Beautiful craftsman home with original wood floors & windows. Possible rental unit or large family room w/kitchen, bath & separate entrance. Level yard with mature landscaping.

\$889,000

SAN RAMON



Stunning & exquisitely updated 2005 modern Gale Ranch gallery home. 5bd/4ba + bonus rm on quiet court. Sleek flooring, rock-walled man cave/ofc. Great yd w/ grass play area, courtyard w/ hot tub & more.

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