

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 11 Issue 17 Wednesday, Oct. 18, 2017



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

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Adventures in home renovation – pitfalls and triumphs of kitchen rehab

By B. B. Kaye



Kent Cremolini carefully reviews plans with Francis Combes of Premiere Kitchens in Lafayette.

Photo Andy Scheck

Kitchens have evolved dramatically over the last 100 years. Your great, great, or even only great grandparents may well have cooked meals in a wood burning fireplace or over a coal-burning stove, after pumping water by hand out in the yard and carrying heavy, sloshing pots back into the house for cooking and washing no matter how cold the time of year.

Nowadays, a kitchen is the most complex room

in a house.

Done well, a kitchen can dramatically increase your quality of life, becoming a sublime center of easy living, a joy in which to entertain family and friends. Done poorly, it can be a miserable affair, inspiring only avoidance or, worse, be an unhealthy and dangerous place.

A truly great kitchen can only be the product of thoughtful planning and communication, where

nothing is left to chance between a homeowner and the craftspeople and designers who are entrusted to create it.

Tom Pollock, a Lafayette resident and home improvement contractor, has been in home renovations for over 30 years, beginning as a union carpenter in Colorado. “Most of the people I work with have already been to an architect to get the big things worked out. I would say to most people who are thinking about doing (a renovation), sit down, think about, and write down what their preferences are. What would they really like, in the design or layout, like where they want the sink, and what size refrigerator. Then they can relay those details to the architect or contractor.

“Even when clients do talk with an architect and they think they have an idea of what is going to happen, they have trouble communicating it to whoever is doing the work,” said Pollock. “They may assume that a feature will be located somewhere, but have not communicated it to anybody. They should communicate all along the job.”

Pollock says architects may have one idea, and so they may do things differently from what the client wants. “Clients should review drawings carefully, and let the architect know if what they are drawing isn’t going to work out,” he said. “It’s much more difficult after the fact. The more planning and thought, and the more you can communicate your preferences, is a good start.”

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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	12	\$942,500	\$1,879,000
MORAGA	14	\$460,000	\$1,895,000
ORINDA	6	\$935,000	\$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

- 1 Beaumont Court, \$1,026,000, 3 Bdrms, 1675 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 9-8-17
- 3632 Boyer Circle, \$1,750,000, 3 Bdrms, 2362 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 9-18-17;
Previous Sale: \$1,605,000, 04-30-04
- 936 Dana Highlands Court, \$1,585,000, 4 Bdrms, 3813 SqFt, 1999 YrBlt, 9-20-17;
Previous Sale: \$1,575,000, 02-26-07
- 651 Evelyn Court, \$1,800,000, 4 Bdrms, 2934 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 9-8-17;
Previous Sale: \$842,500, 11-20-15
- 3094 Hedaro Court, \$1,507,000, 3 Bdrms, 2579 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 9-8-17;
Previous Sale: \$425,000, 09-22-99
- 603 Huntleigh Drive, \$1,295,000, 3 Bdrms, 1749 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 9-14-17
- 633 Los Palos Drive, \$1,000,000, 3 Bdrms, 1980 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 9-12-17
- 1076 North Thompson Road, \$1,879,000, 4 Bdrms, 3322 SqFt, 1928 YrBlt, 9-14-17; Previous Sale: \$1,745,500, 05-15-14
- 412 Read Drive, \$994,500, 3 Bdrms, 1624 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 9-19-17;
Previous Sale: \$180,000, 05-24-85
- 17 Shreve Lane, \$942,500, 4 Bdrms, 2031 SqFt, 2013 YrBlt, 9-15-17
- 3915 South Peardale Drive, \$1,410,000, 4 Bdrms, 2278 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 9-14-17;
Previous Sale: \$310,000, 12-12-94
- 1303 Summit Road, \$1,836,000, 4 Bdrms, 3723 SqFt, 1980 YrBlt, 9-12-17;
Previous Sale: \$1,550,000, 11-16-12

MORAGA

- 1988 Ascot Drive #B, \$460,000, 2 Bdrms, 1233 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt, 9-15-17;
Previous Sale: \$457,500, 06-30-06
- 85 Brookfield Drive, \$1,286,000, 4 Bdrms, 1969 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 9-15-17;
Previous Sale: \$571,000, 03-17-00
- 1463 Camino Peral, \$650,000, 2 Bdrms, 1159 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 9-18-17;
Previous Sale: \$620,000, 01-13-17
- 686 Carroll Drive, \$1,175,500, 3 Bdrms, 1969 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 9-18-17;
Previous Sale: \$840,000, 01-25-17
- 6 Corte Fresca, \$1,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 2340 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 9-11-17
- 406 Fernwood Drive, \$1,550,000, 4 Bdrms, 2781 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 9-13-17;
Previous Sale: \$337,500, 05-18-99
- 25 Hardie Drive, \$1,350,000, 4 Bdrms, 2360 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 9-15-17
- 55 Miramonte Drive, \$684,000, 2 Bdrms, 1762 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 9-18-17;
Previous Sale: \$222,500, 08-18-95
- 106 Miramonte Drive, \$720,000, 2 Bdrms, 1514 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 9-8-17;
Previous Sale: \$560,000, 05-30-14
- 34 Sanders Ranch Road, \$1,510,000, 4 Bdrms, 2581 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 9-15-17;
Previous Sale: \$575,000, 08-08-90
- 26 Sea Pines Street, \$1,317,500, 3 Bdrms, 2828 SqFt, 1982 YrBlt, 9-19-17;
Previous Sale: \$775,000, 10-25-00

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Adventures in home renovation – pitfalls and triumphs of kitchen rehab

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*Detail in a featured kitchen during this year's Lafayette Kitchen Tour
Photo Sora O'Doherty*

Storefronts may appear to have an increased legitimacy over more transient contractors, but occasionally even brick-and-mortar businesses can be a front for the unscrupulous. Owners of a store in Pleasant Hill that specialized in custom cabinetry are currently embroiled in litigation with several Walnut Creek and Lamorinda residents, accused not only of incompetence but also of making off with tens of thousands of dollars in deposits. Kent and Jan Cremolini lost a \$50,000 deposit for kitchen cabinets there, and are attempting to recoup their loss in the courts.

Not to be dissuaded in their desire for a new kitchen, the Cremolinis are forging on with another designer, and are now happily working with Francis Combes of Premier Kitchens in Lafayette.

Lafayette residents Anita and James Low recently completed a bright and spacious modern renovation of their kitchen after enduring 11 years in the small, dark, outdated original.

“It’s difficult to eat well in a kitchen that doesn’t

work,” Anita Low said. “If you don’t have a place to prep and a place to cook, everything has to be quick, or you buy ready-made food, or you spend a whole day of your weekend figuring out a meal plan. My kids were really happy when we got the kitchen done. After four months (of renovation), the first thing that they wanted was scrambled eggs!”

This renovation, however, was not the Low’s first attempt. They tried a contractor who had done a friend’s kitchen, and a number of their friends’ kitchens as well. “I called and asked for references, and looked at his work, and he seemed to be okay, but looks are deceiving.”

The Lows eventually discovered that the contractor was using someone else’s license. Fortunately, they had tried him out on smaller projects first, before committing to anything larger.

“A big red flag was that his own subcontractors told us that his work was not up to par, and that he had a habit of overcharging previous clients by a lot,” Anita Low said.

In the end, that contractor became unpleasant and threatening, and even attempted to collect tools not belonging to him which had been left by other subcontractors.

After that experience, the Lows were thorough and careful in choosing a contractor.

The architect they found was amazing, and he helped them look for somebody who was trustworthy. “This was going to be a long project, with a bigger budget than anywhere else in the house, so we wanted it done right – we had waited years to do it right. I recommend that whether the work is small scale or large scale, that someone be on the jobsite at all times to make sure that the work is done, and done right.”

The contractor they finally settled on had worked in the architect’s own home. “My contractor was awesome, and trustworthy to the point where I gave him the keys to the house after months of working with him, and I have never done that with anybody else. I would even trust him to watch my 5-year-old,” Anita Low said. “He understood not only the structural parts, but also the plumbing and electrical. Not all contractors can do that, and that’s where the subs come on. Ask who’s doing the

work? How many people will they be subcontracting? How long have they been working with those subcontractors to know the quality of their work and reputation for trustworthiness? Ask for extensive references.”

The finest contractors are an amalgam of experience – well-read, artistic, technically knowledgeable, well-versed in materials, tools and techniques, ethical, and rare.

One of the things you can do to prepare yourself for any renovation work is to read building books about your type of project to help you recognize if the work is proper and that the right materials are being used.

Building department rules can vary widely from municipality to municipality, but if actual structural changes are not being made, it is often permissible to replace kitchen interiors without an architect. You can create a sketch, or have the contractor sketch what you communicate.

But Pollock warns that even if you are only replacing cabinets, city rules might require you to get a permit if the work you do is over a certain dollar amount. “It used to be \$500; it might be more than that now, except for painting. Everything has pluses and minuses – while it’s more expensive to get a permit, the city will be overseeing the renovation and protecting you from an unscrupulous contractor or craftsman who might do inferior work, or not do something up to code.”

Homeowners may apply for permits themselves and save some money, but they should educate themselves beforehand in the related codes and terminology. Be sure to ask your local buildings department what their rules are. The more thought that goes into planning – such as changes to plumbing if a sink is relocated – the more pitfalls can be avoided. And always allow for contingencies! Once walls are opened there may be surprises, such as concealed structural damage, dangerous wiring, or corroded or improper plumbing that needs to be replaced or upgraded.

If you do discover such things, look on it as an opportunity to correct them, and do them right. In the long run, you’ll be happy that you did.

(This reporter has been a New York City licensed Home Improvement Contractor and a New York State licensed Home Inspector.)



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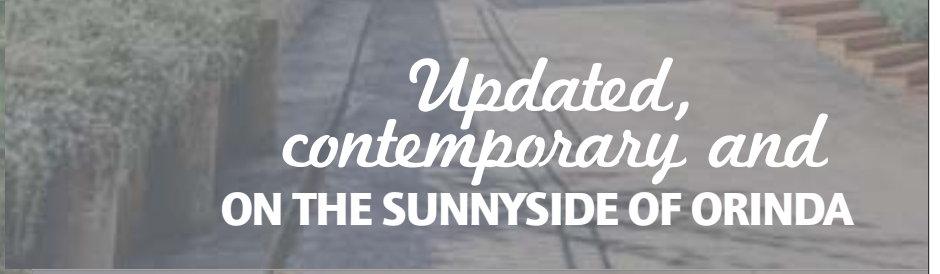




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The Real Estate Quarter in Review

By Conrad Bassett, CRP, GMS-T

The third quarter of 2017 showed solid activity on the residential side of Lamorinda real estate versus the quarter a year ago. This activity continues to be based more upon a short supply of available properties than on a significant change in the market.

Per Contra Costa Association of Realtors statistics reported from July 1 through Sept. 30, 85 single-family homes closed in Lafayette, which was an increase from the 71 that closed in the third quarter of 2016. Sales prices ranged from \$800,000 to \$6.5 million. The average number of days on market was 26 versus 30 for the same period in 2016. The average sales price was \$1,713,249 versus \$1,565,394 in the same period a year ago. In 2015 it was \$1,462,872 versus \$1,310,790 in 2014. The average 3Q2013 sale price was \$1,204,739. In 3Q2012 the average was \$1,001,291. Average prices have increased over 70 percent in the last five years.

In Moraga, the number of single-family closings was 39, almost twice what closed in the same quarter a year ago when there were 21. It was near the 49

in the third quarter of 2015 and 50 in 2014. Prices ranged from \$890,000 to \$2.265 million. The average sale price was \$1,386,634, a \$140,000 increase from 3Q16 when it was \$1,245,605, which was actually below the \$1,281,936 in the third quarter of 2015. It was \$1,178,956 in the same quarter in 2014. In 3Q2012 the average was \$1,049,408. The average marketing time was 19 days, down from 25 days a year ago.

In Orinda, the number of single-family closings was exactly the same as the same period a year ago: 73. It was 69 two years ago, down from 90 in 3Q2014. Sales prices ranged from \$750,000 to \$3.495 million with an average price of \$1,601,869, a minor increase from 2016 when it was \$1,558,244. In 3Q2015 it was \$1,520,904. In 2014, it was \$1,420,663. In 3Q2012, the average was \$1,109,094. It took an average of 26 days to expose a home to the market this last quarter. A year ago, that number was 24.

In the third quarter of this year, on an average price per square foot basis, Lafayette detached single-family

homes sold at \$640.73. A year ago it was \$585.96. Two years ago it was \$573.91. Moraga homes sold for \$551.21 up a bit from a year ago's \$540.27 and \$526.77 in 3Q2015. In Orinda it was \$603.07, a slight increase from \$599.67 a year ago – again, an increase over the 2015 third quarter of \$566.29.

In Lafayette, the average sales price was right at 102.2 percent of the final asking price. In Moraga it was a fraction above 100 percent and in Orinda it was 101 percent. In many cases, there were multiple offers on homes and the result was a closing price above the asking price.

In Lafayette, 58 of the 85 closings sold at the list price or above. In Moraga, 22 of the 39 sold at or above asking and in Orinda it was 38 of 73.

In the condominium/town home category, Lafayette had seven resale closings. They were priced from \$795,000 to \$965,000; Moraga had 19, down from 25 a year ago and from 40 in the same period two years ago.

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FALL REAL ESTATE MARKET UPDATE

While it might be Halloween season the Lamorinda real estate market is anything but spooky these days. Below is a summary of Multiple Listing Service (“MLS”) data for Lamorinda residential detached home sales over the last twelve months from October 2016 to September 2017 (the prior-year comparison is from October 2015 to September 2016).

Our real estate market remains strong as the Summer market delivered record figures for most of Lamorinda. The Lamorinda average sales price is now \$1.56M, up 6%, and the average sales price per square foot is \$610, up 4%. The biggest gains came from homes between 2,500–3,500 square feet where the price per square foot is up 11%. Families are feeling more confident about their financial situation and are moving up into larger homes. In addition, transaction volumes are up 14%, primarily driven by Moraga where transactions are up 37%. We believe this trend can be attributed to the award-winning Moraga schools and the small-town feel. In Lafayette, the average sales price and price per square foot were both up 6% to \$1.61M and \$634. In Moraga, the average price is up 6% to \$1.37M and the average sales price per square foot is down slightly by 1% to \$561. In Orinda, the average sales price is up 7% to \$1.62M and the average sales price per square foot is up 4% to \$610. This is great news for all of us that live in Lamorinda. We expect the market to remain strong through year-end and expect the 2018 Spring market to deliver another record setting performance.

Please see the Lamorinda Market Update section of our website (www.MartinHomesTeam.com) for further details and breaks down the numbers by home size. Please also don't forget to sign-up and participate in the Lafayette Reservoir Run on October 22nd and help support our local schools.



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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded ... continued from page D2

MORAGA

1733 St. Andrews Drive, \$1,279,000, 3 Bdrms, 3150 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 9-22-17;

Previous Sale: \$575,000, 03-31-93

433 Stonefield Place, \$1,895,000, 4 Bdrms, 3303 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 9-18-17;

Previous Sale: \$1,000,000, 09-08-06

121 Westchester Street, \$1,050,000, 3 Bdrms, 2036 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 9-22-17;

Previous Sale: \$129,500, 09-14-79

ORINDA

16 Hall Drive, \$1,560,000, 4 Bdrms, 2393 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt, 9-15-17;

Previous Sale: \$1,400,000, 07-31-14

1 North Lane, \$935,000, 3 Bdrms, 1460 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 9-18-17;

Previous Sale: \$932,000, 07-15-16

99 Tappan Lane, \$2,400,000, 3 Bdrms, 3952 SqFt, 1982 YrBlt, 9-15-17;

Previous Sale: \$85,000, 03-06-80

14 Van Tassel Lane, \$1,450,000, 3 Bdrms, 2728 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 9-8-17

37 Wilder Road, \$2,400,000, 4 Bdrms, 3984 SqFt, 2016 YrBlt, 9-22-17

500 the Glade, \$1,480,000, 3 Bdrms, 2635 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 9-22-17;

Previous Sale: \$875,000, 04-01-09

The Real Estate Quarter in Review ... continued from page D8

Sales prices ranged from \$435,000 to \$1.195 million. Moraga Country Club had five attached home sales – \$775,000 to \$1.05 million. Orinda had one town-home in Orindawoods at \$1.48 million.

As of Oct. 13, there were 87 pending sales in the three communities combined. A year ago there were 65 pending sales per the MLS. The asking prices for the pending single-family detached homes range from \$719,000 to \$13.25 million. It should be pointed out that there are no “Potential Short Sales” that are currently pending and subject to lender approval.

It is interesting to point out that of the 87 pending sales in the area, 21 have received acceptable offers since Oct. 1. That is an average of over one per day. Usually, many of the sales are completed prior to the start of school. Depending upon how many of the homes are being purchased by families with children who are new to Lamorinda, it may impact certain grades at the elementary level. Inventory, however, continues to remain low although increasing when looking at the available homes. In Lafayette there are 42 on the market as of Oct. 13 and there were 45 at this time one year ago.

In Moraga buyers have their choice of only 28 properties, up from 25 properties a year ago.

Orinda inventory has slightly decreased from 46 to 43.

Current asking prices range from \$515,000 for a condominium in Moraga to \$25 million for a Lafayette property.

At the high end, 31 homes closed above \$2 million in the three communities combined during the quarter. In the year ago period there were 26.

There are 47 currently available above this amount: 11 in Lafayette, 24 in Orinda, and three in Moraga.

Going forward through the end of the year, activity will likely remain strong. Low interest rates and continued office building in the East Bay and a low supply and high demand should continue to push the market higher.

We may also see some effect from the fires in the North Bay as there are hundreds of families who need housing and, although our prices are higher, a lot of high-end homes were lost and those people may need places to live until they can rebuild, which may take a few years.

This may affect our rental markets and the residential market for sales.



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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

The grass is always greener ...

By Cynthia Brian

"Society is like a lawn where every roughness is smoothed, every bramble eradicated, and where the eye is delighted by the smiling verdure of a velvet surface." – Washington Irving



A pole of pink and purple petunias shines brightly against the blue skyline.

Photos Cynthia Brian

The cool evenings, warm days, and majestic orange sunsets signal the season of fall. While children will be preparing for the festivities of Halloween, gardeners need to be thinking about greening their lawn costumes. Much to my dismay, throughout the drought our water company encouraged homeowners to dispense with growing grass and either let lawns die or replant with succulents and other drought resistant species. In my humble opinion, this was terrible advice as a healthy lawn offers so many benefits, not only to the environment but also to our health and well-being. It is also much more expensive to revamp a landscape than it is to maintain it, even minimally. With the drought in our rearview mirror, my email has been blowing up with requests on how to reinstall a green lawn.

Thankfully, all is not lost as autumn is the perfect time to plant a new lawn or reseed an existing one. Most grass seeds that you scatter in late October or early November will thicken and be well established by spring. Over-seeding a healthy existing lawn works wonders but if you have multiple bare spots, using a grass patch is a super alternative.

"What type of grass should I plant?" you may be thinking. Several readers have asked about UC Verde buffalograss. Although I have never set out plugs of this buffalograss, it is my understanding that this particular grass must be planted in the spring as it goes dormant in the winter, allowing for more weeds to take hold. It is also work intensive as you cannot just toss seeds or plant sod. Plugs need to be planted on a 12-inch center. Once established, it is resistant to most turf damaging insects and diseases and requires less water than other grasses. Since it is seedless, it produces less seed heads resulting in less pollen, which may be of interest to allergy sufferers.

My personal preferences to obtaining a greener grass is to use seeds from Pearl's Premium (www.PearlsPremium.com), red or white clover, or plant plugs of isotoma,

also known as blue star creeper. Full disclosure: I do not work for, nor have I any affiliation with any of these three favorite lawn alternatives. I recommend them because they work. You can plant just one species for a clean, fresh, green blanket of tactile grass, or you can mix and match as long as you realize that your lawn will resemble a patchwork quilt.

Here's a rundown on my three preferred lawns:

Pearl's Premium: www.PearlsPremium.com

Although you can start from scratch, I really appreciate being able to over-seed my existing lawn with grass seed that grows roots to 20 inches deep, starves out the weeds, and is easy to maintain. Pearl's Premium is constantly upgrading its seed to be the most effective for creating a beautiful lawn. This past year it added a thin white coating to the seed to help gardeners know where exactly the seed has been tossed. The coating also thwarts our feathered diners, although I suggest putting screens over areas with new lawn seed if you witness birds pecking at the ground. Spread the lawn seed at a rate of 10 pounds per 1,000 square feet right over your existing lawn. Add organic fertilizer and top dress with a quarter inch of organic compost. I like to spread the seed right before a rain, but otherwise water twice a day until the grass sprouts; then be attentive to watering needs. In our warmer climate, to maintain the greenest color, you may have to water deeply twice a week, but it will be less than using other grass seeds. Once established, the lawn gets so lush and thick that you may need to adjust your sprinkler heads. Although many people have indicated that they mow once a month, I have found that for the most manicured look, it is necessary to mow at least twice a month, or ideally, once a week at a mower height of 3.5 inches.

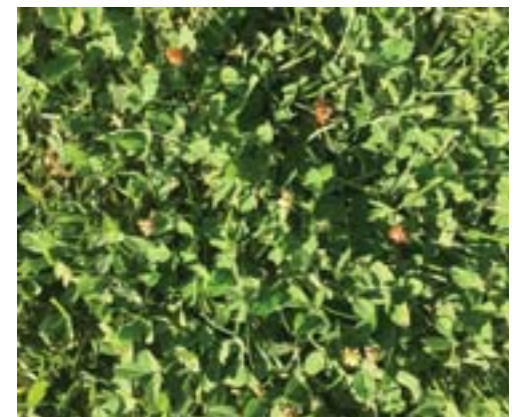
Clover

At one time clover was systematically eradicated from lawns using pesticides. But as gardeners now realize the importance of organic living, more homeowners are including clover in their grass. As a legume, clover has the ability to turn nitrogen into fertilizer using the bacteria in its root system. It stays green all year, even when it is not watered on a regular basis. I love it because it thrives in conditions where other grass seeds struggle. It does fine in the sun or the shade and even in poorly drained soil.

... continued on next page



The fine green leaves of Pearl's Premium, an excellent choice in scattering grass seed for a lush lawn.



Red or white clover is excellent for a lawn in combination with grass seed.

My favorite parts of growing clover, besides its self-fertilizing system, are the beautiful pink or white flowers that crown the tops of the clover when it is left uncut. Butterflies, bees, and beneficial insects flock to clover. Don't be afraid of the honeybees as they usually don't sting when away from their hives. Clover does best when it is mixed with grass seed. I mix mine with Pearl's Premium. Try incorporating two ounces of clover for 1,000 square feet of lawn. By planting the two together, you'll have a minimum care green lawn.

Isotoma—Blue Star Creeper

This lawn substitute is best used in small areas or between stepping stones. I like it for its tiny blue star flowers that surface and shine brightly spring through summer. I would only use it in combination with clover and Pearl's Premium because I have found that in the cold months it has a tendency



The blue star flowers of isotoma are lovely as a filler in a grass seeded lawn.

likes full sunshine, doesn't require much water, and sustains immense foot traffic, both human and animal, without damage. It sends out runners and creeps along and is especially good as a ground cover. If you like the idea of a patchwork lawn, buy a flat or two of isotoma and plant the plugs randomly throughout your existing grass as a filler and thriller.

For homeowners who want instant gratification, sod is the answer. The caveat with planting sod is that the roots don't grow deeply enough and sod has a shorter lifespan. You can lengthen the longevity by over-seeding when bare spots begin appearing. By throwing seed on top of the sod, keeping the grass watered and fed, you'll be able to have a long lasting green oasis.

Benefits of Maintaining a Lawn

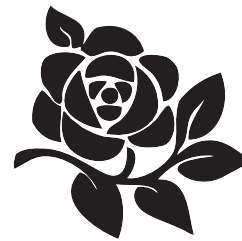
Although many people tend to discourage lawns in landscapes as a water conservation method, I am a firm believer that the humble grass shoot offers benefits to our health and well-being. Besides the fact that children and animals enjoy a safe, comfortable place to tumble and toss, lawns contribute to 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 in viewing a landscape, offering a resting space between the color explosions of flowers and shrubs. And a huge plus in our fire prone communities, lawns offer a buffer zone for fire prevention.

The grass will only be greener if you maintain it. You'll be rewarded with better health for you and the environment. Your green grass is your safety zone. May all your roughness be smoothed as you delight in your velvet verdure.

... continued on page D14



As a ground cover, Baby Tears works well in the shade. It is not a lawn substitute.



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Cynthia Brian's Mid-Month Garden Guide

- **FIRE** danger is at a high point this month. Be alert. Remove brush, wood, dry grass, and all other flammable materials from around the perimeter of your home. Clear your roof and gutters of leaves. Create 100 feet of defensible space around your home and structures.
- **SIGN** up for emergency notifications at www.nixle.us. The easiest way is to do it through text messaging on your smart phone. Text 888777. In the message area, type in your zip code. You will get an alert in case of any impending emergency.
- **APPLY** deer repellent to young trees and shrubs. As winter nears the deer are hungrier and will do damage to saplings causing branch injury and even inviting diseases.
- **EAT** fresh locally grown figs and grapes.
- **CHECK** for decay or damage to trees to thwart injury or downing of trees when storms arrive.
- **MULCH** your landscape to prevent erosion in winter and protect plants from a freeze.
- **SWIM** a few laps in a garden pool before the cold weather begins.
- **ORDER** my new gardening book, "Growing with the Goddess Gardener," from my online store and receive extra goodies; 25 percent of the sales will benefit Be the Star You Are!® 501c3 helping in disaster relief. <http://www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store>

Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!



Add mulch now to the garden for winter protection, erosion control, and water retention.

Photos Cynthia Brian



For fall color, add coleus and begonias to your landscape.



Fresh local Mission figs and seedless grapes are nutritious and delicious.

As I wrote this column, devastating fires were raging throughout California and in my home area of Napa County affecting my family, friends, and thousands of residents. My heartfelt empathy to everyone for your suffering and loss. Pray for the firefighters, first responders, evacuees, shelter volunteers and everyone who is affected by this most disastrous fire in California history. We will rise again!



Cynthia Brian sits on her porch.

Cynthia Brian, The Goddess Gardener, raised in the vineyards of Napa County, 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. Please make a donation to help with hurricane disaster relief at www.BetheStarYouAre.org. Tune into Cynthia's Radio show and order her books at www.StarStyleRadio.com. My new book, "Growing with the Goddess Gardener," is available at www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store. Available for hire for any gardening project. Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com www.GoddessGardener.com

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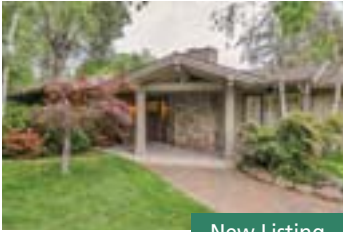


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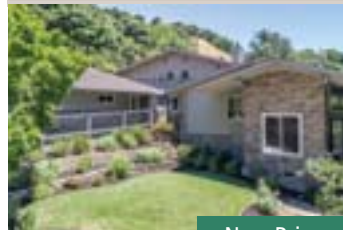
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