

# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 11 Issue 19 Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2017



*Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian*

*...read on page D9*

## Taking care to prevent damage to (and from) trees

By John T. Miller



*This rotted tree had potential of toppling nearby powerlines. Photos Pippa Fisher*

With last winter's considerable rain following three years of drought, many large trees toppled, causing considerable damage throughout the Lamorinda area. Homeowners and residents are anxious to know what measures they can take to prevent more of the same this year.

According to a pair of arborists interviewed, the bad news is that it may be too late to save your tree, and it will take swift action to save your – or your neighbor's – house.

Once signs of disease or decay appear above ground, the damage to the roots may have progressed too far and cannot be undone.

Certified arborist Thomas Raeth, with Lafayette Tree and Landscaping, gives a list of some of the practices that can lead to disease: “When we have a drought and people cut back on water it can manifest stress in different ways. It may take time for trouble to develop.”

While conserving water is necessary, mature trees need to have deep watering to maintain their health, says Raeth. “Pines are a good example. The drought stretched their health, allowing beetles to invade and consume the trees.”

Raeth cautions that when mulching trees, it's important to use properly composted chips. “People cut down trees because they're diseased, and if you put those chips back on the ground without sterilizing them, the disease goes back into the ground.” Also, if the chips are fresh, they use up nitrogen to decompose, depriving your

trees of nutrition. Proper composting can take up to two years, with temperatures needing to reach 400-500 degrees in the pile.

A common mistake is pruning while the sap is active in the tree. The best time to prune is from December to February.

Another error is leaving the stake from the nursery attached to a newly planted tree. A new stake should be placed at least 6 inches from the tree, allowing for wiggle room. “The movement of the trunk stimulates the tree to strengthen its roots,” says Raeth. When the tree is sturdy enough to support itself, the stake should be removed.

*... continued on page D4*



*The split in the trunk of this tree reached all the way to its base.*

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# Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	5	\$735,000	\$2,450,000
MORAGA	2	\$650,500	\$900,000
ORINDA	2	\$1,290,000	\$2,290,000

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

21 Burnt Oak Circle, \$2,090,000, 4 Bdrms, 3166 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 10-13-17;

Previous Sale: \$1,080,000, 01-28-16

4051 Fiora Place, \$1,450,000, 4 Bdrms, 2497 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 10-16-17;

Previous Sale: \$415,000, 06-11-93

933 Janet Lane, \$1,000,000, 3 Bdrms, 1814 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 10-10-17;

Previous Sale: \$18,500, 11-10-70

1408 Meadowlark Court, \$2,450,000, 4 Bdrms, 3442 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 10-10-17;

Previous Sale: \$2,005,000, 08-20-14

3279 Mt. Diablo Court #20, \$735,000, 2 Bdrms, 1386 SqFt, 1987 YrBlt, 10-16-17;

Previous Sale: \$552,000, 10-24-14

## MORAGA

1501 Moraga Way, \$630,500, 2 Bdrms, 1635 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 10-20-17;

Previous Sale: \$575,000, 04-20-07

275 Paseo Bernal, \$900,000, 3 Bdrms, 2018 SqFt, 1980 YrBlt, 10-20-17;

Previous Sale: \$750,000, 08-01-07

## ORINDA

7 Bates Boulevard, \$1,290,000, 3 Bdrms, 1900 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 10-17-17;

Previous Sale: \$335,000, 06-27-90

83 Donald Drive, \$2,290,000, 5 Bdrms, 5762 SqFt, 1991 YrBlt, 10-10-17;

Previous Sale: \$1,537,000, 06-20-05

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# Taking care to prevent damage

... continued from page D1

Homeowners should also avoid letting ivy or other vines crowd out the stump and climb the tree. Clear away shrubs or vines from the base of the tree and pull down parasitic vines.

John Traverso, certified arborist and owner of Traverso Tree Service in Saranap, recommends a visual inspection to detect potential problems. He warns, however, "Looking for something and having the knowledge to know what you're looking for are two different things."

Included in his visual inspection are the shape of crotches; elongated, poorly tapered branches sticking out of the canopy; heavy leans; cracks in the soil or uplifting and mounding on the backside of a lean; and fungal brackets on the lower trunk.

Traverso recommends periodically measuring the lean of a tree with a level to find out if the angle is getting worse. "Bark compression or folding on the leaning side of the tree along with bark separation on the backside indicates trouble."

Another indication of decay can be holes made by birds. He says, "The birds are making use of an already existing cavity, which means decayed wood already exists inside."

Traverso recommends pruning and/or crown reduction to mitigate some problems. Poorly tapered limbs are highly prone to failure, especially if decay is present.

Fungal growth on trunks and mushrooms around the base of a tree can indicate



A brave soul, in red, climbs the trunk of this rotted pine tree, cutting away branches to prepare to take the tree down.

Photos Pippa Fisher

compromised wood tissue and shouldn't be ignored. This can also be an indication of too much water (e.g.: putting the tree on a lawn watering schedule throughout the summer).

While old, diseased trees may need to be removed, here are some tips for raising a new one:

- 1) Pick a tree appropriate for our conditions.
- 2) Remove decayed trees and roots from the planting site and use composted mulch to top dress. Traverso states, "Healthy raw material such as tree chippings, especially those with leaves and carbon materials mixed, tends to bring to life the process which benefits the soil and trees in the long run."
- 3) Do not water too often. Native trees prefer deep watering during the winter months. If subjected to a dry winter, supplemental irrigation should be applied in February through March for most trees, especially oaks, and not in summer.
- 4) Fertilizing should be performed in the fall or winter so nutrients can be processed and ready for absorption by the roots in the spring.
- 5) Use judicious pruning techniques in young trees to thin, shape and direct growth. Different trees have different demands and proper pruning methods are crucial, especially in the first few years.
- 6) Be mindful of the tree's drip line and allow for drainage. A tree's root structure is generally equal to or well beyond its growth aboveground.

When in doubt, call a certified arborist. Most will give a free estimate.



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# A fresh look at holiday décor

By Amanda Eck



Photo Amanda Eck

Can you believe the holidays are upon us? We haven't even finished off all the Halloween candy and the stores are already bombarding us with Christmas décor.

Well, as the saying goes, "If you can't beat them, join them!" So today I wanted to share some thoughts on how to bring some holiday cheer into your home without it necessarily looking like Santa's workshop.

I have clients ask after we have created a beautiful new space for them, "How will I decorate for Christmas and still coordinate with my new décor?" While I love all things red and green just as much as the next person, sometimes this bright palette can clash with your space. I prefer to use everyday items you already have and pull colors from your décor. I am also a believer in keeping it simple.

I use three simple elements in my holiday decorating: fresh greenery, ribbon and glass ornaments.

For the coffee table we used a silver tray filled with gold and silver ornaments surrounding silver candlesticks and tucked in a few fresh sprigs of greenery. During the day, the ornaments gave off a wonderful shimmer and in the evenings we enjoy the candlelight.

In the dining room I went with bold color, but not the usual red and green. Here I used dinner plates in cobalt blue, emerald green and gold and layered them on top of a bold graphic black and white runner. ... continued on page D8

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## What the GOP Tax Plan Means for Lamorinda Homeowners

As we move into the holiday season the GOP has provided a topic for the Thanksgiving dinner table, a new tax plan. The recently released House Republican tax bill contains significant changes that are important for Lamorinda homeowners to understand if this bill passes. Californians already face the nation's highest state income tax rate of 13.3% and when combined with the highest Federal rate of 39.6%, you end up paying income taxes of 52.9% of your income.

Under the proposal there are three changes for homeowners: First is a reduction in the amount of mortgage interest that can be deducted; Second is a new cap on property tax deductions; Third are limits to the capital gains exemption used by homeowners when they sell. Current homeowners are allowed to deduct interest paid on mortgages valued up to \$1.1 million, but the proposal cuts the cap to \$500,000 for future purchased homes. Also, the bill limits the mortgage interest deduction to only your primary residence, ending the deduction for vacation homes. For anyone with a mortgage more than \$1.0 million this would effectively cut your deduction in half. Mortgages over \$1.0 million are commonplace in Lamorinda where the average home price is now \$1.6 million.

Under the tax plan the deduction for property taxes will be capped at \$10,000. With local property tax rates close to 1.2% the proposal would effectively eliminate any deduction for assessed home value more than \$830,000. Likely the most important change, is the limitation of capital gains exemption on the sale of your home. Currently married couples can exclude up to \$500,000 in capital gains from the sale of their primary residence if they have lived in their home for two of the last five years. Under the bill the period will increase to five of the last eight years and you will begin to lose the gain exemption if the income of married couples exceeds \$500,000. Combined with the deterrent that CA Prop 13 provides to potentially selling your home (e.g. the step-up in your assessed value of your home) this provision will put further handcuffs on families looking to move up into larger homes and empty nesters looking to downsize.

Please feel free to contact us with your real estate questions - Erin at [erin@MartinHomesTeam.com](mailto:erin@MartinHomesTeam.com) or Darrick at [darrick@MartinHomesTeam.com](mailto:darrick@MartinHomesTeam.com).



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## A fresh look at holiday décor

... continued from page D6



Photo Amanda Eck

The centerpiece was filled with fresh tulips and greenery and a pair of faux boxwood balls sit atop gold candleholders. Again use what you have and adding simple embellishments. The only purchase I made was the dinner plates and everything else I had on hand.

The dining room and living room are not the only spaces reserved for Christmas decorating. I love adding some holiday cheer to the master bedroom. This space was full of creams, blues and soft browns. So we brought out the blue with a silk ribbon. We hung a fresh wreath on the mirror and decorated the nightstands with an ivory stocking and small wreath. We opted for faux greenery above the bed, because no one wants pine needles falling on their head while sleeping, right?

I also love having a small tree in the bedroom, especially at night. I love crawling into bed after a long day to read by the light of the tree. There is something magical about turning off all the lights, except the lights on the tree.

Last but not least is the front door. Every year I try and dream up new ideas for my front door. One year it was a trio of fresh wreaths tied with red velvet ribbon; another year it was a black and white velvet stocking filled with fresh greenery. And my favorite was from a few years ago. I choose a simple green

and white palette. Instead of the trio of wreaths I added a gold sunburst mirror to mix things up. Fresh greenery was draped over the outdoor console table and a paper mache deer was spray painted white.

I hope this inspires you to try some of these ideas in your own home and you won't be afraid to try new colors in your holiday décor. I wish you and your family all the best this holiday season.

Until next time!

As the Owner and Principal Designer of Lamorinda-based Amanda Carol Interiors, Amanda Eck believes your home's interior should be both approachable and well-appointed. She often asserts, "Beauty is a necessity."

With a distinct sense of style that mixes

contemporary and classic design she fashions spaces that are both elegant and inviting. Her design aesthetic is inspired by anything visual but especially fashion, architecture and art.

Visit <http://amandacarolinteriors.com> for more design ideas.





*Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian*

## A cornucopia of gratitude

By Cynthia Brian

*"A person of power embraces challenges in complete gratitude. No matter the situation life may bring, discontent is never justified, rather all is experienced as an opportunity and a privilege to adventure and grow."*

– James Ray



*An arrangement of succulents, Brandy roses and ribbons.*

*Photo Cynthia Brian*

**I**t's raining! Hurray, hurray for the nourishing drops from heaven. I have always been a sunshine goddess; however, after a summer and autumn of extreme heat, I am so grateful for the sweet smell of the musky earth after a shower and the pile of fallen saffron hued leaves that transport me to my childhood days.

To feel gratitude after an angry Mother Earth has unleashed her fury on our planet for the past several months is heroic. My heart has been heavy with the multiple hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, fires, windstorms, as well as the horrific terrorist attacks and lone wolf concert massacre. Despite efforts to shake off the terror, a sense of loss and personal sadness permeates every pore. As I respond to readers and speak to strangers, a deficit of hope clouds the air. With catastrophe after catastrophe ... politically generated, humanly engineered, or natural disaster ... is there any wonder that confusion and division reigns?

Yet, what the world needs now is love, sweet love. As Jackie Deshannon so eloquently sang, "it's the only thing that there's too little of." We can begin sharing the love by beginning to grow gratitude for what we have instead of wallowing in what we lack or what we've lost.

Enter the garden.

The garden is and always has been a safe place – a secret refuge from the concrete jungle. In the garden we can take a deep breath, delight in the perfume of the flowers, and relish the tactile experiences when touching smooth blades of grass, the fuzzy leaves of lambs ear, or digging our fingers into the dirt. We forget about time in the garden as we witness butterflies, bees and bugs going about their pollination business while listening to the rustling of the leaves and the eloquent music of the songbirds. A garden creates community and hugs us with affection. We have the unique opportunity to cultivate and connect to our native roots ... earth.

... continued on page D10

**Patti  
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*I* believe in the art of living well.

Whether helping first-time home buyers & move-up buyers or downsizing empty nesters & seniors, I want my clients to live well at every stage of their lives. I'll do whatever it takes to help them enjoy a seamless transition from one of life's passages to the next. This is my promise.

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*Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian*

## A cornucopia of gratitude

... continued from page D9



*The pistache tree berries are turning colors in time to deck the halls.*

*Photos Cynthia Brian*

As we celebrate November, the month of being thankful, let us look to our garden sanctuaries with gratitude. In this month's column, I offer you a collection of my favorite photos that commemorate the sass of the season. These images reflect the colorful cornucopia of happiness and tranquility on our journey through autumn. I hope you will feel energized and inspired by their beauty, originality and simplicity.

Gardens are powerful teachers. They comfort and console. They evolve and advance with our loving care. When we collaborate with our surroundings, we sustain and increase our humanity and humility. The garden is with us always and the gifts it dispenses are unlimited.

May your Thanksgiving be a day filled with giving thanks and espousing love.



*The last vestiges of leaves on the grapevines.*



*Wild turkeys are part of the Lamorinda wild kingdom.*

# Cynthia Brian's Mid-Month Reminders

... continued from page D9

**RAKE** leaves to mix into your compost pile. Do not put them in the green bin unless they are diseased as leaf mould adds valuable nutrients back into the soil.

**REFRAIN** from raking an area completely clean as bare soil is not a natural state. Allow a small covering of leaves to slowly decompose where they fell. By clearing the soil completely, erosion and leaching are invited.

**TRENCH** plant your bulbs of muscari, tulips and hyacinths to get the job done swiftly.

**ADD** healthy houseplants to your interior décor to clean the air, lower blood pressure, help with concentration, and reduce stress.

**FORCE** amaryllis, hyacinths and paperwhites as thoughtful green holiday gifts.

**SCATTER** wild flower seeds for a surprise spring showing.

**CHECK** trees for stability before winter storms arrive. Call in a professional arborist to help you prune any unwanted or dangerous branches. Safety is of the utmost importance.

**FERTILIZE** your entire landscape. An especially auspicious time to throw fertilizer or pre-emergent is right before a rainfall for maximum absorption.

**PICK** the last of your grapes and use the colorful grape leaves in your autumn arrangements.

**THROW** snail and slug bait before the crawlers devour your precious plantings.

**DIVIDE** perennials such as daylilies, dahlias and iris.

**EXPLORE** the diversity of our local hillsides with an invigorating Thanksgiving hike.

**TAP** into your inner child and roll in the fallen leaves. Make angel wings as if the leaves were snow. Remember how fun that was when you were just a kid!

**ARRANGE** dried grasses, mushrooms, acorns, magnolia cones, moss and lichen-covered branches for an elegant tabletop setting.

**MEDITATE** outside in the chilly autumn air and breathe in the aromas of the earth.

**CLEAN**, sharpen and oil tools before putting away for the winter.

**ADD** a cornucopia of gratitude to your daily fruit basket.

Wishing you a blessed Thanksgiving with family and friends.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.

Cynthia Brian



Cynthia Brian thanks you for reading *Digging Deep*. Happy Thanksgiving.

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 & fire disaster relief at [www.BetheStarYouAre.org](http://www.BetheStarYouAre.org). Tune into Cynthia's Radio show and order her books at [www.StarStyleRadio.com](http://www.StarStyleRadio.com).

My new book, *Growing with the Goddess Gardener*, is available at [www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store](http://www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store).

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# LAMORINDA'S LEADING INDEPENDENT REAL ESTATE FIRM

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New Listing!

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## ORINDA



New Listing!

### 44 Knickerbocker Lane,

Large 4 bedroom/ 2.5 bath home nestled in one of Orinda's most convenient neighborhoods.

**\$1,430,000**

## ORINDA

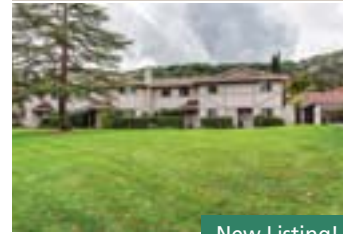


### 40 Los Altos Road

This 4605sf handsome custom contemporary is the quintessential restorative retreat in OCC. Views/ Pool/Tennis/Gardens – all on 2.27ac.

**\$2,495,000**

## MORAGA



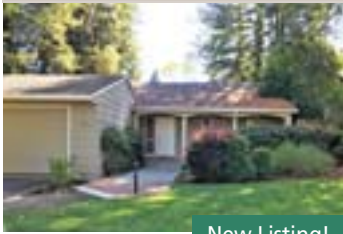
New Listing!

### 76 Miramonte Drive

Popular Miramonte Gardens townhouse! 3 beds/1.5 baths conveniently located to the clubhouse & pool. Walk to school!

**\$585,000**

## MORAGA



New Listing!

### 1735 Saint Andrews Drive

Moraga Country Club – 5th Hole View! This single level detached home features 2 beds, 2 baths, in 1444 Sq. ft. Peaceful setting & top schools!

**\$975,000**

## MORAGA

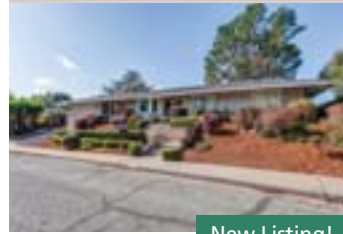


### 1822 Saint Andrews Drive

Lovely detached single family home in Moraga Country Club. 3 Beds, 2 Baths +Den. Fully remodeled eat-in kitchen & baths. Top Schools!

**\$1,075,000**

## MORAGA



New Listing!

### 722 Crossbrook Drive

Big Sunset Views - 4bd/2ba, 2,352 sq.ft. on .73 acres: Updated rancher w/ kitchen/Family overlooking level backyard. Top schools!

**\$1,375,000**

## MORAGA



### 23 Indian Wells Street

Moraga Country Club Bruzzone built Wimbledon Expanded. 4 Bedrooms/ 3 bathrooms/ 3122 SqFt. Top-Rated Schools!

**\$1,400,000**

## MORAGA



### 5 Lisa Lane

Beautiful Sanders Ranch estate with rolling hill views is an entertainers dream. Level backward, pool & sports court.

**\$1,775,000**

## LAFAYETTE



### 961 Oak View Circle

Complete fixer with approved plans for Beautiful Craftsman Style home in amazing location.

**\$1,290,000**

## LAFAYETTE



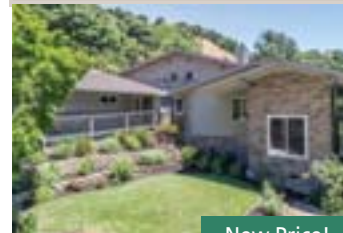
New Price!

### 18 Toledo Court

Happy Valley neighborhood, .94 acre with level yard. Walls of glass, kitchen opens to family room. Bonus room.

**\$1,750,000**

## LAFAYETTE



New Price!

### 1200 Glen Road

Fabulous location & views! Multi-gen living close to town/BART. 5bd +library +bonus room +full apartment attached.

**\$1,995,000**

## The Village Associates:

Ashley Battersby  
Patricia Battersby  
Shannon Conner  
Meara Dunsmore

Linda Ehrich

Joan Evans

Linda S. Friedman

Dexter Honens II

Anne Knight

Susan Zeh Layng

Charles Levine

Darrick Martin

Erin Martin

April Matthews

Hillary Murphy

Karen Murphy

John Nash

Ben Olsen

Sue Olsen

Tara Rochlin

Jaime Roder

Altie Schmitt

Judy Schoenrock

Ann Sharf

Amy Rose Smith

Molly Smith

Jeff Snell

Lynda Snell

Steve Stahle

Clark Thompson

Angie Evans Traxinger

Ignacio Vega

Ann Ward

Jenny Lyons Wilhite

Margaret Zucker

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