

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 11 Issue 25 Wednesday, Feb. 7, 2018



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

Repeat remodelers love life on the trail

By Cathy Dausman



This Love remodel is an updated version of an Eichler home.

Photo Mendelson Architecture

When it comes to home remodeling, Courtney and Steve Love have amassed a lifetime of experience in a mere 15 years.

The Loves' serial remodeling story began in Burlingame, while living in a century-old Craftsman. "I really do love old homes," said Courtney Love. Over the course of a year with the help of "an amazing builder" they expanded their Craftsman home base-

ment, remodeled its first floor (keeping the original windows) and added a second floor.

"It was a fun, good project," Love said. The family lived there for six years before they purchased a tear down in the Burlingame hills. "I don't even know how we got a loan (for that house)," she admits. The couple rehired their builder and began designing a Spanish-style house. Because of the hillside, that

house would become a three-story home.

When the Loves realized the near-constant stair climbing involved, they decided not to move in but rent it out until it could be sold.

But Burlingame can be cool and windy, and Courtney Love longed for the sunshine.

"One year we tied balloons to patio chairs for our daughter's birthday," she said, "and the wind blew the balloons right off the strings."

The Loves began to house hunt in Lamorinda, where their realtor recommended the Lafayette trail neighborhood. The couple made an offer on an aging four-bedroom ranch abutting the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail. Courtney Love had not even seen the inside—she was out of town.

In many ways their new purchase, a 1942 home, had outlived its usefulness. A family of five skunks occupied the crawl space, the master bedroom was virtually unheated (cosmetics in bathroom drawers froze overnight) and drainage backed up into the bathtub. The Loves considered simply remodeling, but not for long.

With their Burlingame Spanish hillside home as yet unfinished, the Loves offered their general contractor a partnership to complete the project, then acquired a second construction loan. They also moved for the fourth time in four years.

Design and planning of their current house took almost two years – a bit longer than the Loves expected, but they wanted to be sensitive to the concerns of their new neighbors. Their dream this time was to build a single story modern home that fit into a neighborhood of ranch homes. ... continued on page D4



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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	7	\$860,000	\$1,500,000
MORAGA	5	\$315,000	\$1,537,500
ORINDA	2	\$1,050,000	\$1,460,000

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

- 3255 Ameno Drive, \$1,250,000, 4 Bdrms, 1911 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 1-9-18
- 1028 Dyer Drive, \$1,235,000, 3 Bdrms, 1269 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 1-2-18;
Previous Sale: \$663,000, 08-28-09
- 3486 Monroe Avenue, \$1,500,000, 6 Bdrms, 2414 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 1-3-18;
Previous Sale: \$530,000, 03-17-00
- 1121 Palomares Court, \$1,160,000, 4 Bdrms, 1963 SqFt, 1946 YrBlt, 1-12-18;
Previous Sale: \$343,000, 06-07-00
- 1689 Springbrook Road, \$985,000, 3 Bdrms, 1124 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 1-16-18;
Previous Sale: \$651,000, 06-24-11
- 23 White Oak Drive, \$1,225,000, 3 Bdrms, 2508 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 1-5-18;
Previous Sale: \$262,500, 09-15-82
- 301 Willoughby Court, \$860,000, 3 Bdrms, 1724 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 1-5-18;
Previous Sale: \$177,000, 07-22-80

MORAGA

- 2133 Donald Drive #15, \$315,000, 1 Bdrms, 560 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 1-10-18;
Previous Sale: \$64,000, 11-23-82
- 1106 Larch Avenue, \$1,150,000, 4 Bdrms, 2403 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 1-3-18;
Previous Sale: \$995,000, 01-05-15
- 9 Ross Drive, \$1,090,000, 3 Bdrms, 1788 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 1-9-18;
Previous Sale: \$820,000, 04-30-10
- 1899 School Street, \$1,278,000, 3 Bdrms, 1963 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 1-9-18;
Previous Sale: \$1,162,500, 07-20-06
- 1873 St. Andrews Drive, \$1,537,500, 4 Bdrms, 2883 SqFt, 1983 YrBlt, 1-12-18;
Previous Sale: \$650,000, 12-17-03
- 125 Westchester Street, \$735,000, 2 Bdrms, 1661 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 1-12-18
- 1061 Wickham Drive, \$1,025,000, 4 Bdrms, 1858 SqFt, 1969 YrBlt, 1-8-18;
Previous Sale: \$236,000, 06-27-86

ORINDA

- 52 Mira Loma Road, \$1,460,000, 4 Bdrms, 2240 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 1-4-18;
Previous Sale: \$677,500, 11-18-03
- 49 Sanborn Road, \$1,050,000, 2 Bdrms, 1254 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt, 1-5-18;
Previous Sale: \$40,500, 04-21-72



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HVAC ducting, new sewer lateral and newly professionally landscaped yard is a lovely place to call home! Not only is the house amazing, but the neighborhood is too – with proximity to downtown Orinda, Moraga and Lafayette, this friendly "trick-or-treat" street is also close to Moraga Valley Swim and Tennis club or Moraga Country Club for the golf enthusiasts. 115 Coral Drive is not only a perfectly updated house, but also a truly wonderful place to call home.

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Repeat remodelers love life on the trail

... continued from page D1



Large windows bring in light and outdoor views.

Photo Mendelson Architecture



Clean lines give a modern feel to this kitchen.

Photo Mendelson Architecture

The result is an updated version of an Eichler home – full of light, clean, bold lines, atriiums and indoor/outdoor living space.

Architect Joel Mendelson removed everything except a single bathroom wall, then added 700 square feet. “These expansions added two bedrooms, a guest bathroom, an expanded master suite and a new kitchen-dining wing,” he said. “A cabana and small garage replaced the oversized existing garage, leaving greater room for the new pool.”

The cabana provides pool shade in the summer. The new home is 2,900 square feet.

The home exterior is wood – a bleached and stained, sweet-smelling cedar planking set horizontally. A clerestory skylight in the raised kitchen ceiling is wrapped in the same cedar. Original plans called for a butterfly roof there, Steve Love says, but the couple felt it would make the ceilings too high and leave the interior space feeling institutional.

The west-facing front entry consists of two walls of glass and a generous built-in wooden bench. Floors are wide planked engineered white oak and match the white oak kitchen countertops. The cabinetry and shelving is poplar and maple. The kitchen, dining and living areas have glass walls opening onto a backyard of grass, young trees, concrete decking and a swim-

ming pool.

Despite removing the fireplace, code compliance called for a ceiling sprinkler installation. The small white disks are unobtrusive. The bedrooms – four on one side (three are their children’s bedrooms; the fourth is a media/game room) and master on the other – were intentionally designed on a smaller scale, although the master includes an alcove for an at-home office. A concrete partition wall shields the kitchen appliance workspace from the dining area. LED lighting, in-wall, Cat-5 cable, electric outlets with built-in USB plugs and in-ceiling speakers complete the tech checklist. Two color landscapes painted by a neighbor adorn a dining area wall.

Although the Loves have not hosted an open house for neighbors, their home was part of the 2017 Lafayette Juniors kitchen tour. Courtney Love agreed to share this remodeling story as a way to allow Lamorindans an inside glimpse into their trailside home.

Love says being on the trail means two of her three children can walk or bike to school. Even their cat Pico loves the trail ambiance. “Most people can’t stomach the idea of spending (that much) money (at once) for major home building projects,” she said, but her financial background gave her the needed confidence.

Courtney Love likens building, or home remodeling, to having a baby. And when the “baby” looks this good, what’s not to love?



Photos Kate Webber

//JUST LISTED



119 Starlyn Drive, Pleasant Hill

Starry-eyed in Starlyn Estates

This wonderful custom home is located on a quiet cul de sac within walking distance to fabulous schools, the Canal Trail, and fun parks. It is situated on a great .28 acre lot with inviting decks, lawn area, relaxing hot tub, and an expansive play area.

The home has been lovingly cared for and enjoyed...some amenities include: hardwood floors, vaulted ceilings, living room fireplace with raised hearth, formal dining room, and an open kitchen/family room/sunny breakfast nook combination, all with seamless access to the inviting back yard.

The four bedrooms are all carpeted, the master retreat opens to a private deck with an inviting and relaxing seating area with spa.



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Bitcoin in Real Estate

Right after the new year, a long-time client came to us and explained that she inherited a large sum of cryptocurrency. She found a home that she wanted to purchase and asked us what we thought about making an offer with a down payment in cryptocurrency with traditional financing. Bitcoin has recently gained mainstream notoriety as merchants like Microsoft and Subway have begun accepting the cryptocurrency. In order to use bitcoin to purchase real estate, it is not as simple as getting a buyer and seller to agree on the form of payment. Such a transaction is complicated when considering you need to actually find both a buyer and seller willing to exchange this new form of payment as well as how financing, escrow companies and title insurance are impacted.

For starters, most lenders will not accept bitcoin or cryptocurrency as a down payment for conventional financing. There may be lenders willing to provide such a product but none that we spoke to. Even if our client was able to combine bitcoin with traditional financing, or even pay fully in crypto we expressed our concern that the seller pool willing to except crypto for payment is limited. Ironically this week the Contra Costa Times printed an article about a home in Oakland that is being offered in cryptocurrency. The article mentioned that the response from buyers was overwhelming.

While there are online brokers that claim to have handled real estate transactions involving cryptocurrency, traditional title companies have yet to embrace this new form of payment. This makes obtaining title insurance difficult. Also, given the recent pull-back in the value of bitcoin, which recently traded below \$10,000 from a high of above \$19,800, the hype around completing real estate transactions in cryptocurrency might fade as most people will not want to deal with the associated volatility and risk.

Please feel free to contact us with your real estate questions -
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At home with Amanda

By Amanda Eck



Our team created this adult haven by adding exquisite new bedding, a custom upholstered bench with acrylic legs, new nightstands, original art from a local up-and-coming artist, custom drapery, and a small sitting area with a settee, floor lamp, and side table. Photos provided



This client's master bedroom was lacking warmth and sophistication. They had purchased the upholstered bed and lamps, but were stumped with what to do next.

February is always an odd month for me; I am still savoring the cold quiet dark evenings of winter, yet longing for the warm days of spring. So since we are still in the throes of dark chilly nights, I thought I would share my top five tips for creating a cozy and inviting bedroom.

When I meet with clients to work on their homes I often see that the master bedroom is the last room on the wish list, or in many cases it doesn't even make the list. I too have been guilty of focusing on the rest of my home (the spaces everyone sees and lives in) while my most sacred space, my place of evening respite and morning stillness, is neglected. I hope these ideas will have you thinking twice about your bedroom.

1) Declutter your space. There is nothing worse than crawling into bed and looking over at your nightstand cluttered with yesterday's coffee mug, used tissues, unread books collecting dust, and stacks of work papers. Take some time each evening to clear off your nightstand. Keep a dust rag or roll of paper towels tucked under your bed to brush away the dust bunnies. Remove dirty laundry daily. Try and resist the urge the toss clean clothes over the chair (guilty; it drives my husband nuts). ... continued on page D13



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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

Jungle fever

By Cynthia Brian

"The human spirit needs places where nature has not been rearranged by the hand of man." ~Source Unknown



Cobras, roots, and the encroaching jungle were tamed at the ancient temple where "Laura Croft: Tomb Raider" was filmed. Photos Cynthia Brian

Completely covered by tangles of roots and vines, it is only in recent years that many ancient grandiose brick and sandstone temples were rediscovered in Cambodia. These monumental structures, built on top of one another for over seven centuries as capitals of the Khmer Empire, have survived the passage of time. The jungle swallowed cities and palaces constructed of wood leaving only skeletal remains and inquisitive monkeys. The bustling, colorful life of the Angkor civilization was left to the imagination and research of historians, explorers, archaeologists, and me.

If you ever watched the 1991 film, "Lara Croft: Tomb Raider," you glimpsed the unexcavated and unrestored temple of Ta Prohm completely reclaimed by the jungle. Immense trees grow like magic out of stone walls and through roofs. Our guide told us that visitors were allowed to explore the ruins only in the past few years because this area was occupied by cobras, many as long as 20 feet. To

deter these venomous serpents from continuing to nest here, lemongrass was planted, and it is keeping the poisonous snakes away.

Southeast Asia is uncomfortably hot and humid. The jungles are wild and untamed. The flora is bright, beautiful, and bizarre. Palm, coconut, banana, mango, papaya, jackfruit, passion fruit and breadfruit plantations fill the landscape alongside the never-ending fields of rice. Most villagers don't have running water or indoor plumbing; the banana groves serve as their toilets. Nothing is wasted. Every part of a plant is used for food, shelter, fire, clothing, furniture and other life necessities.

Both in Vietnam and Cambodia, water lilies and lotus flowers grow magnificently in the waterways. Although the two are often confused, water lilies have pads and flowers that float on the surface of the water while the lotus flowers and leaves rise a foot to several feet above water. The various colors of the lotus flower retell tales culturally revered. Because lotus flowers grow in murky water, an unfurled white lotus refers to purity of body, mind and spirit. A red lotus boasts of love and compassion. The favorite pink lotus tells the story of Buddha and the many legends surrounding him. Purple represents mysticism, royalty and spirituality. Lotus flowers are gathered and made into spectacular art pieces delivering the spirit of enlightenment and good fortune to those who embrace their grace and beauty.

Betel leaves and the areca nut are important symbols of love and marriage in Vietnam. A groom's parents will begin the conversation with the potential bride's parents by offering areca nut chewing. In Vietnamese weddings the leaves and juices are used in the ceremony. Betelnut is a stimulant and mind-altering substance. It is also known as "the scourge of Asia" because it causes oral cancer.

Rich in protein, calcium, potassium, iron and other nutrients, the leathery, prickly Jackfruit is considered to be a miracle food with the potential to supply an entire family a complete meal. Grown in every garden, mangoes are a main staple of daily diets, considered one of the most important fruits for improved wellness. They are low in calories, filled with vitamin C, A, B6, and beta-carotene, important elements to fighting cancer, regulating diabetes, aiding in better eye sight, digestion and clear skin.

Golden Shower trees were laden with buttery yellow flowers bringing light and cheerfulness to pathways, hills and cemeteries. One of the most beautiful, yet prickly

plants I witnessed was the Crown of Thorns, an ever-green cactus (*Euphorbia Mili*) that blooms year round in hot and sunny locations. It requires very little water, has spectacular scarlet, pink, yellow, white or salmon colored bracts, grows to three feet or more, and is covered in one-inch spiky thorns. We can grow it outdoors or as a house-plant, however, as gorgeous as it is, definitely keep it away from children.

In the Mekong Delta, floating villages and traditional houses on stilts line the banks with residents laboring and living the way they have for centuries, harvesting what the great waters provide to survive and earn a living. Baskets and mats are created from river reeds and water hyacinth, ancient boats advertise their crops for sale with the fruit or vegetable speared on top of a high pole, floating fish farms supply fresh seafood, while floating markets sell just-picked produce. Sampans are made by hand from felled "Sao" wood, a very water resistant variety of oak.

Discovering the smiling, resilient people and the tranquil lush landscapes untouched by the hands of humans in Southeast Asia, inspired me to pause, breathe deeply, and appreciate this wild environment, once a hotbed of warfare and genocide. Without interruptions from phones and internet, I calmly disconnected from "civilized" chaos to welcome the wonders of essential nature. Spending time meditating in solitude and having a water blessing by monks awakened my sense of gratitude for the gardens of life.

Although I never encountered a tiger, I was consumed by jungle fever. ... continued on page D14



A meditation center on a lake in the jungle outside of Phnom Penh.

At home with Amanda



The addition of this well-lit reading area is perfect for relaxing with a book or enjoying a nice cup of tea.

Hang them up immediately. Try to keep the kiddos' toys out of your space, or at least have a basket or bin to store them away at bedtime. A simple evening routine of tidying up before bed creates a state of order and you can wake up feeling like you already have jump on your day.

2) Purchase high quality sheets. There is nothing more irritating than sleeping on cheap, scratchy sheets! By investing in two sets of nice high thread count sheets, you'll ensure better sleep in comfort and style. My favorite sheets are the Gobi Embroidered sheet sets from Sernea & Lilly.

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.



... continued from page D8

3) Invest in good lighting. Proper lighting, such as overhead lights on a dimmer, whether it is recessed lights or a chandelier or both, bedside lamps, preferably with two-way or three-way switches to control the amount of light, or a small book light that you tuck into your nightstand can help create the proper mood for your master bedroom oasis. If you do not have any overhead lighting, a floor lamp or another lamp on the dresser can help illuminate dark corners.

4) Create a small reading nook. If you have the space, being able to create a reading corner or place to have morning coffee is ideal. While I love reading in bed, there is something comforting about being able to sit in a comfy chair in the bedroom and enjoy a cup of tea or curl up with a good book. And little ones love crawling up with mom or dad to read a book before bed.

5) Refine your space with fresh flowers, candles and music. Never underestimate the power of a small fresh floral bouquet picked up from the grocery store. For music, we have a Bose portable speaker in our bedroom. We like to play soft jazz to unwind, or hip-hop and party music when we have an impromptu dance off with the kiddos (yes momma's got some moves), and I love playing Salsa music when putting away the laundry (hey, it helps). I like to keep unscented votive candles around for soft light in the evenings or vanilla scented ones for a warm yummy fragrance.

I hope I have inspired you to take a second look at your sacred space and take some time to make it beautiful. I am off to go tidy up my bedroom – got to hang up those clothes!

Until next time my dear friends! Xoxo



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DOORS

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for February

... continued from page D12

- **GATHER** up all fallen camellia blossoms to prevent disease in your soil.
- **FORCE** bulbs of amaryllis or lily of the valley by adding water to a jar with the bulbs and placing near a sunny window.
- **PLACE** a stem of Daphne by your bedside to sweeten your dreams.
- **ADD** ferns, hostas, and caladiums to a shady spot as companion fillers.
- **APPLY** final application of dormant spray to fruit trees.
- **PLANT** anemone, ranunculus, and freesia for late spring blooming. If you already have freesia growing, blooms will appear in late February.
- **BUY** copies of my newest garden book, "Growing with the Goddess Gardener," from www.CynthiaBrian.com/online-store for best prices and loads of extra freebies. Know what to do in your garden every month! Contact me for fees and scheduling to come speak at your event. Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com
- **SHARPEN** tools for spring spading.
- **BRING** the jungle flavor indoors by purchasing cymbidiums with several spikes of flowers.
- **GIVE** yourself some moments of silence. Use your outdoors as your contemplation and meditation room.
- **REMEMBER** Valentine's Day with a potted plant or beautiful bouquet for your sweetie.

Happy Love Day! Happy Gardening! Happy Growing!



The Gold Shower tree grows to 40 feet with clusters of golden yellow flowers.



Flower market in Phnom Penh.



Fresh vegetables of every sort are brought to markets daily by village farmers.

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Mangoes on Gieng Island.

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.

Tune into Cynthia's Radio show and order her books at www.StarStyleRadio.com.

Her new book, "Growing with the Goddess Gardener," is available at www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store.

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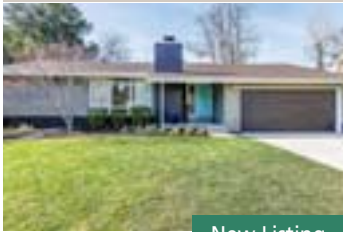


Cynthia Brian treks into Angkor Wat and the surrounding jungles.



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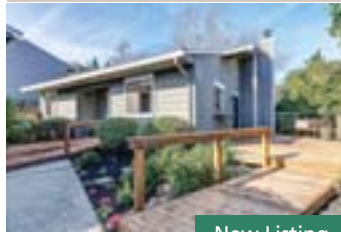


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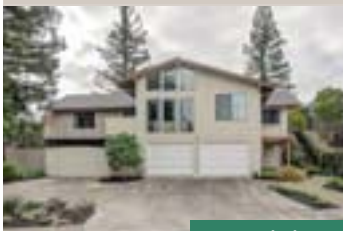


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