

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 12 Issue 1 Wednesday, March 7, 2018



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

Growing their backyard garden

By Cathy Dausman



Sharon Metcalf holds a tray of her Sun Gold tomato plants grown in her greenhouse from seeds. While Mt. Diablo in the background was snow covered, the plants survived the recent cold snap just fine.

Photo Andy Scheck

Sharon Metcalf's "little babies" are consigned to her backyard, and although recent nights have been frosty, her "babies" are staying nice and warm. Their nursery is a greenhouse shed on a raised platform on a Moraga hillside.

When Lamorinda Weekly visited, the vista of rolling green hills included a dusting of snow visible on Mt. Diablo's slopes, but full sun and a southeastern exposure ensured the temperature inside the greenhouse was noticeably warmer than ambient midday air temperature.

The view looking out was crystal clear. "I only wipe the panels maybe once a year on the inside," Metcalf said.

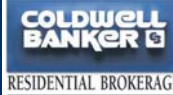
Metcalf is a self-taught gardener, who started as a child, following in her father's footsteps. "My Dad would love this," she said, gazing fondly at tomato starts of San Marzano, Roma, sun gold and Black Krim plus peppers, herbs and flowers including marigolds and her favorite – hollyhock – all poking their seedling heads out of potting soil for the requisite 60- to 90-day incubation period.

... continued on page D4





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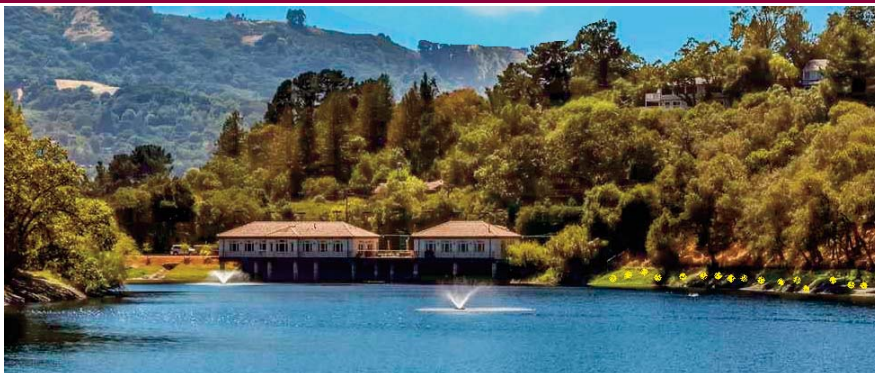
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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	9	\$450,000	\$4,200,000
MORAGA	3	\$515,000	\$1,395,000
ORINDA	9	\$300,000	\$4,000,000

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

- 3669 Boyer Circle, \$450,000, 3 Bdrms, 2309 SqFt, 1926 YrBlt, 2-6-18;
Previous Sale: \$970,000, 10-04-17
- 3235 Camino Diablo, \$850,000, 2 Bdrms, 1236 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 2-5-18;
Previous Sale: \$160,000, 11-24-15
- 1825 Del Rio Drive, \$940,000, 5 Bdrms, 2123 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 2-2-18;
Previous Sale: \$829,000, 10-28-05
- 1020 Dyer Drive, \$1,214,000, 3 Bdrms, 1609 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 2-7-18;
Previous Sale: \$895,000, 05-04-17
- 1168 Glen Road, \$2,165,000, 3 Bdrms, 2627 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 2-9-18;
Previous Sale: \$1,887,500, 04-17-17
- 172 Haslemere Court, \$875,000, 3 Bdrms, 1638 SqFt, 1988 YrBlt, 2-5-18;
Previous Sale: \$875,000, 02-01-18
- 4125 Los Arabis Drive, \$4,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 3934 SqFt, 1972 YrBlt, 2-2-18;
Previous Sale: \$1,630,000, 05-01-02
- 961 Oak View Circle, \$1,000,000, 2 Bdrms, 1113 SqFt, 1942 YrBlt, 2-5-18;
Previous Sale: \$610,000, 03-24-14
- 12 Shreve Lane, \$573,500, 4 Bdrms, 1962 SqFt, 2013 YrBlt, 2-12-18

MORAGA

- 124 Ascot Court #B, \$515,000, 2 Bdrms, 1233 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt, 2-6-18;
Previous Sale: \$435,000, 02-26-15
- 1941 Ascot Drive, \$780,000, 2 Bdrms, 1379 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 2-9-18;
Previous Sale: \$395,000, 02-13-02
- 503 Augusta Drive, \$1,395,000, 4 Bdrms, 3713 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 2-8-18;
Previous Sale: \$1,395,000, 11-08-17

ORINDA

- 25 Bigleaf Road, \$650,000, 2-6-18
- 160 Camino Don Miguel, \$4,000,000, 4 Bdrms, 5851 SqFt, 1929 YrBlt, 2-7-18
- 162 Camino Don Miguel, \$4,000,000, 1 Bdrms, 627 SqFt, 1929 YrBlt, 2-7-18
- 84 Davis Road, \$1,261,500, 2 Bdrms, 1841 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 1-30-18;
Previous Sale: \$195,000, 07-29-85
- 7 Easton Court, \$880,000, 3 Bdrms, 1624 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 1-30-18
- 515 Miner Road, \$3,200,000, 5 Bdrms, 5818 SqFt, 1938 YrBlt, 2-9-18
- 643 Moraga Way, \$1,050,000, 3 Bdrms, 1601 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 1-30-18;
Previous Sale: \$820,000, 09-20-05
- 113 Rheem Boulevard, \$1,583,000, 4 Bdrms, 2634 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 2-9-18;
Previous Sale: \$260,000, 02-23-90
- 7 Via Farallon, \$300,000, 4 Bdrms, 3130 SqFt, 1930 YrBlt, 2-5-18

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Growing their backyard garden

... continued from page D1



Space for the garden after the pool was removed.

Photo provided



The greenhouse is modest – an aluminum frame and polycarbonate window affair. They purchased the 6-foot by 8-foot shed from a big box store 10 years ago and assembled it on site.

“It was a day project,” said husband, Mike Metcalf, former Moraga mayor and council member, before explaining that the wooden deck supporting the greenhouse was a separate project.

“When this (shed) falls apart we’re going to make a real one out of wood,” Sharon Metcalf promised.

There is no thermometer to measure the temperature difference, but direct sun has been warm enough to warrant opening the greenhouse vent and necessitate the installation of mesh screens on the roof to filter the sunlight. Mother nature will provide some shade once the nearby apple tree blossoms.

A greenhouse does more than simply extend the planting season. Even in the relative mildness of a Mediterranean climate a greenhouse provides protection against temperature swings, blustery wind and damaging rain; it also limits exposure to critters and insects. A greenhouse allows plants to be grown year-round.

The Metcalf backyard was not originally sunny. When the couple bought the house in 1985 their lot contained six large pine trees that obscured the view and cut down on sunlight. Their slopes held plenty of juniper too. The pines and juniper were removed earlier and “last summer we pulled the (backyard) pool,” Mike Metcalf said, adding “I’m glad it’s gone now.”

The pool was an above ground model nestled into the yard and surrounded by decking; Sharon Metcalf insisted the deck be left in place when they developed their new 30-foot by 15-foot garden plot. She had Mike build stairs into each end of the oval garden. He grumbled about that project, Sharon says, but Mike Metcalf said the hardest part was installing the plumbing.

The area has two cedar plank raised garden beds on a watering system. As prefab kits ordered online, their installation was a snap. “There’s not a nail in the place,” Mike Metcalf said, pointing to the slotted metal corner posts. “It’s all screwed.”

The result is a sunny, bark dust and stepping stone enclave four feet below deck level, which offers full sun exposure and plenty of wind protection. Latticed wood outlines the oval garden. A fabric screen can be quickly mounted on the boxes’ metal arches to keep out avian invaders, but Mike Metcalf expects that circling birds of prey will discourage the smaller breeds from lingering in the garden or even on the ground.

Sharon Metcalf plans her winter plantings in late summer. That crop has already yielded broccoli, Brussels sprouts and golden beets. She says homegrown food simply tastes better. When the summer garden is established in May, the Metcalfs look forward to harvesting a salad full of greenery.

The rest of their lot includes plum, apricot and cherry trees, a blood orange, lime and lemon tree, pomegranate, persimmon, grapes, a rose bed and a



While the winter garden is coming to an end, Sharon can still enjoy picking fresh broccoli.

Photo Andy Scheck

Granny Smith apple tree.

Mike Metcalf knows his wife just loves working in the garden.

“My first love is roses,” Sharon Metcalf says, eyeing her blossoming buds, “then the garden.” She’s definitely got the green thumb, and the yard for it.



Super-model home IN SLEEPY HOLLOW



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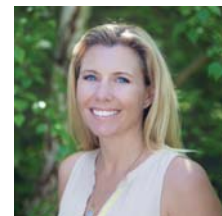
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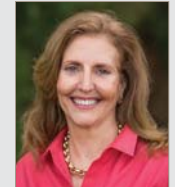
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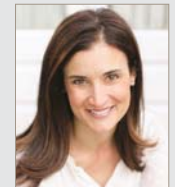
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Mortgage Rates Are Rising

The benchmark 30-year fixed-rate mortgage rose this week to 4.52 percent, according to Bankrate's weekly survey of large lenders. Rates have increased almost half a percentage point since the beginning of the year and have risen for seven consecutive weeks. 30-year fixed rates are at the highest point since April 2014, when the average rate was 4.54 percent. The rise in mortgage rates are primarily being driven by a rise in inflation as lenders are anticipating the Federal Reserve will need to increase rates to offset the impact of a tightening labor market, massive tax cuts and increased government spending. Just last week the New Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell addressed Congress by signaling the Fed will keep raising rates to contain inflation.

So, what does this mean for Lamorinda home values? In short, not much. While the rise in mortgage rates might have a more profound impact on markets around the country the strong Bay Area economy, limited inventory, the numerous all cash buyers and early spring market results all point to another strong year for the Lamorinda real estate market. Not only is the Bay Area economy strong but Lamorinda will continue to be a beneficiary of the trend of New Tech firms basing employees in San Francisco, making Lamorinda a viable commute option. Until more high-density housing options are available, the lack of inventory will continue to push prices further north and mitigate any impact of reduced homeownership tax incentives and the higher cost of ownership with rising mortgage rates. In addition, today's buyers that need a loan must continue to compete with numerous all cash buyers that are not directly impacted by rising rates.

Also, the early Spring market results show no signs of slowing. The recent volatility in the stock market did not even register with buyers as other market forces continue to support the upward price trend. While not the best news for buyers this is a great time for anyone looking to sell their home.

Please feel free to contact us with your real estate questions -
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Savvy looks increase bookshelf interest

By Amanda Eck



Photos provided

One of the questions I often get asked is how to style bookshelves without making them look cluttered. For the most part bookshelves are meant for books, right? But lately we are seeing a trend of having shelves look a little more stylish and less like a library. Don't get me wrong, I am all for a beautiful built-in lined with dusty old books beckoning me to curl up with a cup of tea, but in today's tech savvy world our books are now collected on our electronic devices. So what's one to do with all those empty shelves? Here are some easy tips for creating a stylish bookshelf.

1. Go big or go home: Start with your largest items first. I love using pottery, vases, sculpture, or other unique objects. If you have floor to ceiling bookshelves I prefer to place only one large piece in the top shelf. Visually it helps bring the eye up and it's also less to dust. Because let's face it, anything higher than six feet may often not see the feathers of a duster (at least that is the case in my house). Less is definitely more.

2. Try a tray: For your smaller items try placing them on a decorative tray. Small tchotchkes scattered about can clutter up a bookshelf, but corralling them on a tray will look better visually and keep things tidy. Grouping like items together even without a tray will look better than individually scattering them about.

3. Stack 'em up: Stacking books horizontally instead of upright does two things: one, they take up more shelf space eliminating the need for more "clutter" and two, they create a riser to display a decorative item (i.e. coral, decorative boxes, orbs).

4. Family time: Now that you have filled in your shelves with the biggies and corralled your littles, it's time to display your treasured family photos. I try and stay away from chunky ornate frames and go for simple frames – either brass, chrome or even frameless. Keeping all the frames the same will also help create a more cohesive and stylish feel.

... continued on page D10

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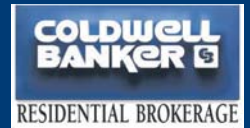


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Savvy looks increase bookshelf interest

... continued from page D8

5. Go green: Add some natural elements to your bookshelves. If you have a black thumb like me, go faux. Gone are the days of the dusty, musty fake ivy. Succulents, boxwood, and other greenery that look incredibly real are replacing those dated silk plants. Pottery Barn even now has an entire botanical shop filled with realistic faux foliage. So go green without the worry of weekly watering. Another designer's secret –

add real potting soil to the top of your faux plant to fool your friends. I also like to use moss or pebbles for added texture.

Decorating your bookshelves can feel daunting but hopefully with these easy tips you will be able to tackle those shelves with ease.

Happy styling!



Here we grouped our client's brass candlesticks to create a fun vignette.

Photos provided



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."

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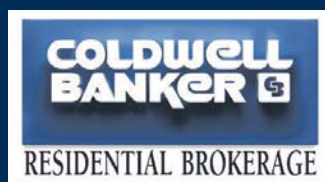
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Bells. Whistles. Campo.
Oh my.



JUST LISTED: 351 Calle La Mesa, Moraga

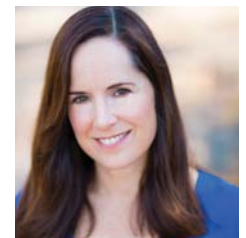
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**COLDWELL
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Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for March

March on and spring forward!

By Cynthia Brian

"Truth is rarely written in ink. It lives in nature." – Martin H. Fischer



Pear blossoms fall from the trees like snowflakes.

It all started with a box of toothpicks.

My siblings and I finally had the heart and the stamina to begin cleaning out our mother's farmhouse that was built before 1900. We made the mandatory four piles—garbage, donation, share, and keep as we meticulously emptied and cleaned each drawer and cabinet. When we came upon several brand new boxes of toothpicks, we kept a few and shared the rest.

When I returned home, I opened my drawer where I kept my toothpicks to discover that I already had six boxes of 500 picks. Horrified, I emptied that drawer; created four piles, and what began as a simple task of putting away a small box of toothpicks resulted in a full day of purging and organizing.

Which gets me to our garden marching orders for the month. It is time to clean out the potting shack, clear the storage sheds, organize the garage, and tidy up our cluttered gardens. Prune the hedges, edge the lawn, sharpen tools, wash the lawn mower blades, and pull the sprouting weeds.

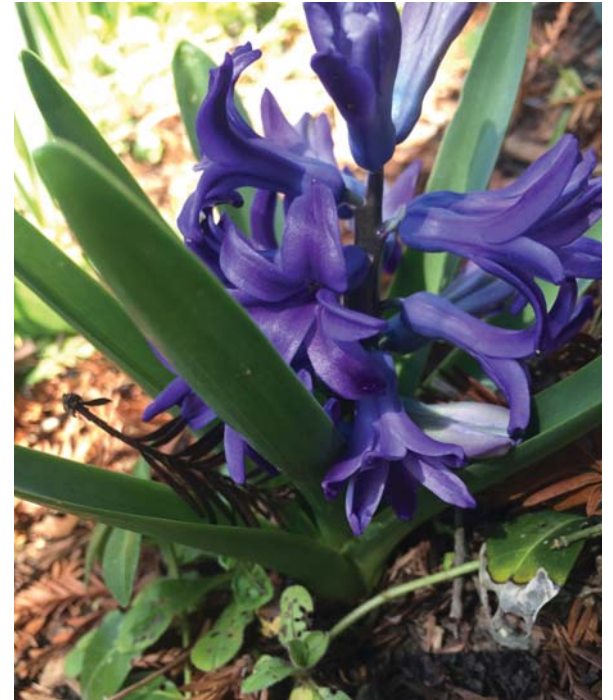
Spring forward by cleaning our houses and removing the debris from our gardens.

There is something about the pre-spring season that revs up our systems and begs us to dust off the old to make way for the new. We yearn to get rid of the mess that has been gathering. My storage area was filled with odd pieces of wire, broken light fixtures, string lights, patio pads, tiki torches, oil, glass, lawn seed, fertilizer, soil mixes, Christmas tree stands, old toys from kids long gone, punctured hoses, and a multitude of under utilized machines and gadgets geared to make gardening simpler but in reality were just too burdensome. It took me a full seven days to bring order to the chaos.

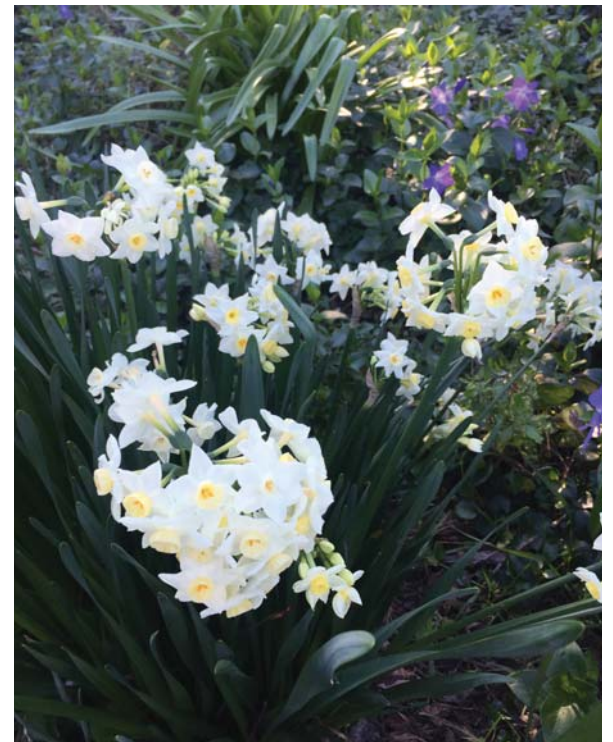
As overwhelming as this project sounds, the best way to start is to just start!

Don't be paralyzed by the enormity of the task. Do it bit by bit but take everything out of the spaces you are going to clean. Don't try to "wipe" around anything. Everything out! Once the space is empty, sweep it, mop it, brush out the cobwebs, and disinfect it. Next, designate four areas for decluttering: Keep, Donate, Trash, Recycle/Sell. You will be amazed at how much junk you have. Anything you are keeping, donating, giving away, or selling must be cleaned.

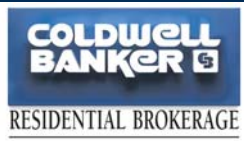
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Hyacinths are pushing through the soil to announce the arrival of spring.



White narcissi and blue vinca minor are excellent bedmates.



Tom Stack



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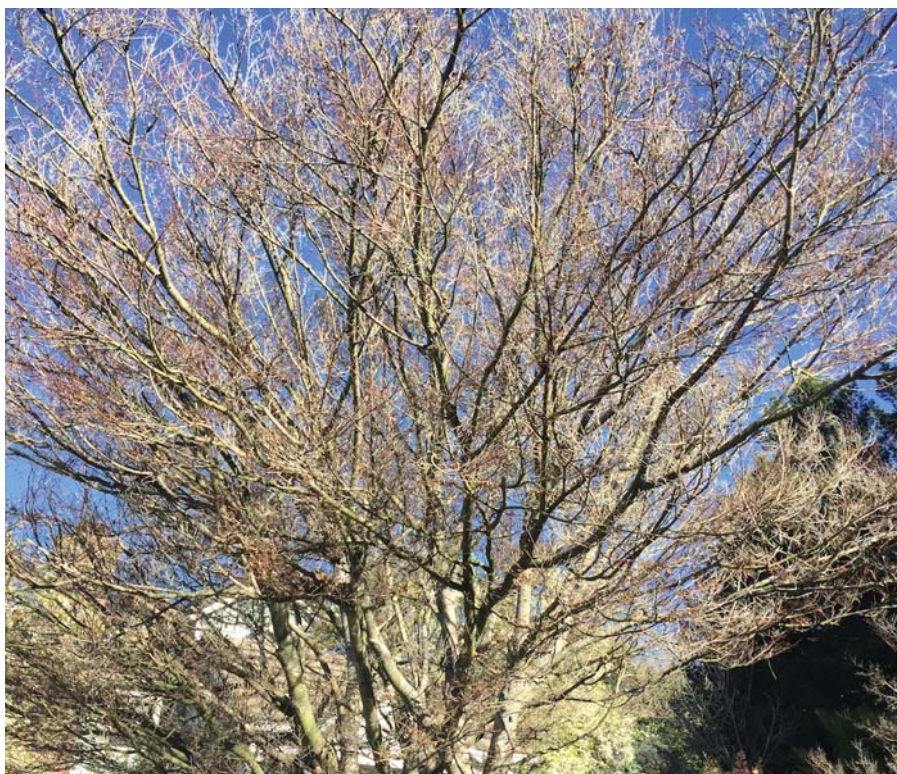
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March on and spring forward!

... continued from page D12



Bare Branches of Japanese maple remind us that spring has not sprung yet!

Dump the trash unless you have chemicals, insecticides, pesticides, paints or contaminants. Take those items to a special facility for disposal. Contact your garbage collection agency for drop off locations. Box your donations and donate immediately lest you be tempted to reclaim items. Do the same with your recyclables or sale items. Organize what's left to store in a manner that is easily and safely accessible.

Walk around your garden and really look at your landscape. What needs a tune up? Are the hinges on your gate squeaking? Do you have broken fence slats? Do your hedges need a haircut? When was the last time you painted or stained your deck? Is it time for a patio power wash?

Pick up the dog bones, clean out the litter boxes, and get a storage container for all of the unused children's or pet toys. Check your irrigation system. Turn on the sprinklers to determine if you have any broken heads or pipes. What about your nightscaping? Do you have bulbs that are burned out? Are the batteries run down on your solar lights?

Your front entrance and sidewalk are the first greeting areas for yourself and guests. Give your porch a thorough cleaning and sweeping. Add a blooming plant in a pretty container. Buy a new welcome mat. Polish the hardware on your door.

After weeding your flowerbeds, add a fresh layer of mulch not only to beautify your landscape, but also to retain moisture and keep the soil temperatures constant while deterring erosion. Turn the compost pile.

As you march around your yard you'll discover a plethora of chores that are begging for your attention. Make a list, check it twice or three times, and get to the most important items first.

Garden Happenings

The bare branches of the trees tell us that it is still winter, but the buzzing of the bees coupled with the sweet melodies of songbirds indicate that spring is right around the corner. My garden seems to have awakened from its slumber a full month early. Until the last

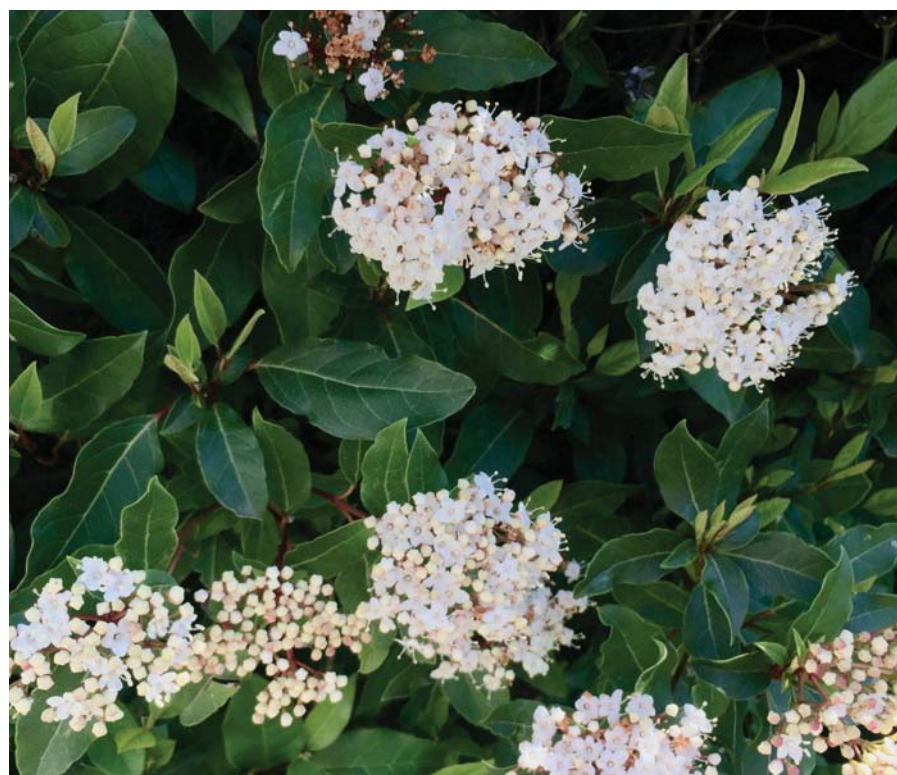
few days of the month, February had been bone dry and exceptionally sunny forcing numerous plants to bloom early. Daffodils, and narcissi have been blooming for two months and will continue for another two. The Italian white peach that normally forecasts a St. Patrick's Day celebration burst into full bloom on Valentine's Day. My shamrocks, also known as oxalis, are in their cheery yellow glory. Colorful freesias, tulips, Dutch iris, calla lilies, and hyacinths announce the stirrings of spring.

The precipitation was welcome news, but the cold front that accompanied the rain dropping temperatures into the 20s caused tender plants to freeze. The morning after the first frigid night, the shriveled shapes of lamium, sage, and nasturtium greeted me on my daily meditation walk. Part of tidying the garden is to understand what to prune back and what to leave until all danger of frost has past. The sage and lamium are best cut immediately, while the pruning of the nasturtium will wait until later in the month. Viburnum, with its tiny white flowers, does well in cold weather and accentuates the beauty of a four-season garden.

If you properly pruned your roses toward the end of January or beginning of February, you will see that they are now sprouting leaves. Within a month, buds will open. A few of my David Austen roses are already blooming. I am still planting bare root roses. World renowned rosarian Michael Marriott will join me on my radio broadcast from 4 to 5 p.m. on March 7. Get more information at <https://www.starstyleradio.com/starstyle-radio>. Michael will discuss the latest trends and techniques in cultivating a beautiful rose garden.

My mother used to instruct us with the words "cleanliness is next to Godliness." That truth wasn't written in ink, but it did help me toss that extra box of toothpicks. I know for certain that everything looks so much better and more attractive when it's clean and clutter-free.

Live in truth. Live in nature.



Viburnum shines in any landscape during winter or spring.

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for March

- BRING branches of forsythia or quince inside to allow the blooms to open in a vase.
- PICK up fallen camellias.
- FERTILIZE the entire garden, if possible right before it rains.
- BUY discounted tickets to the A's versus Angels baseball game for June 15 with proceeds benefitting local charity, Be the Star You Are!®. www.BetheStarYouAre.org/events
- HARVEST wild mustard for salads and soups. Delicious and nutritious.
- DIG up beets and make sure to eat the tops.
- COME to LaGaelrinda event at St. Mary's College between 9 to 1 p.m. March 17 to visit the Be the Star You Are!® booth where I'll be selling and autographing my newest book, "Growing with the Goddess Gardener."
- WANT an instant privacy screen in your yard? For immediate large hedges, a new product will ship this spring from a company called Instant Hedge offering 13 varieties of ready-to-plant hedges that have been growing for five years with heights up to six feet. Inspired by plantscapes in Holland, the panel of four trees with dense foliage will ship in a biodegradable cardboard box. Visit <http://instanthedge.com>.
- POT a clump of oxalis shamrocks for your St Patrick's Day dinner.

Wishing you the luck of the Irish and the wind at your back. March on and spring forward!

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.

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.

Buy a copy of the new book, Growing with the Goddess Gardener, at www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store.

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Cynthia Brian gets ready for St. Patrick's Day in a field of shamrocks.

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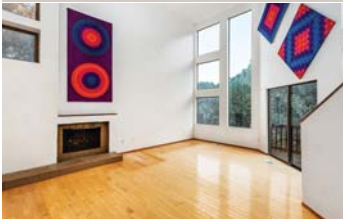
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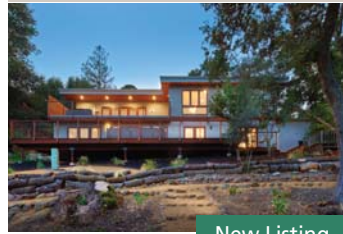
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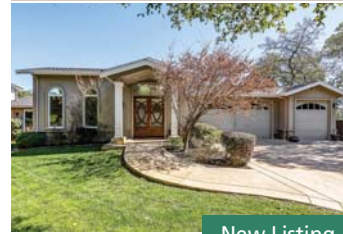
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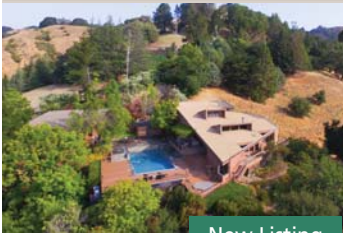


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