

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 12 Issue 4 Wednesday, April 18, 2018



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

...read on page D14

Bringing back the natives - plants and art in Lamorinda gardens and beyond

By Sophie Braccini



Photo provided

Each year, the Bringing Back the Natives organization opens amazing gardens planted mostly with native plants to inspire and delight. This year music and visual art is included in the presentations on Sunday, May 6. As usual the self-guided tour is free, though a contribution is appreciated.

For those new to native gardening the first stop must be Al Kyte's garden in Moraga. The decades-old garden is fully mature and Kyte is an endless source of knowledge and advice.

Several new gardens are added this year. Martha and Kerwin Lee's garden in Lafayette includes an attractive rain garden that collects rainwater from the roof and allows it to slowly seep into the soil, thus protecting Las Trampas Creek, which flows through the rear of the garden, from scouring. The rain garden also provides a deep drink to the garden's plants after the rains have stopped. There will be music in the garden from noon to 1 p.m. with a performance by the award-winning Stanley Middle School "Jazz Messengers" and art in the garden from the Coyote Brush Studios, which will sell handmade zipper pouches made of cloth with native plant designs, as well as native plant prints, cards, and more.

In Orinda, Elizabeth O'Shea and Richard Howard's garden has been conceived to attract wildlife. Forty species of birds, including quail, cedar waxwings, yellow-rumped warblers, acorn, downy, hairy, and Nuttall's woodpeckers, and Cooper's, red-shouldered, and red-tailed hawks, are frequently seen in or above the garden. Bluebirds and ash-throated fly catchers have used the nest boxes and acorn woodpeckers raised their young in a snag. Great horned owls swoop overhead. Bats flit by in the evening. A barn owl box waits hopefully for inhabitants. Butterflies, including pipevine swallowtail and monarch, flutter about. Foxes and skunks, king and garter snakes, and lizards pass through the garden.

There is also art in the garden with evocative and whimsical sculptures created from organic and reused materials nestled comfortably throughout. The large metal palm provides focus in the central area; Ozzy the ostrich rocks gently when birds light upon it. Admire and purchase Melissa Snider's beautiful illustrations of native plants, butterflies, moths, waterfowl and more. Native plants will be for sale.

Many more Lamorinda gardens and beyond are featured in the tour. For information and tickets, visit www.bringingbackthenatives.net.

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COMING SOON

Moraga - Beautifully appointed inside and out! Over 3,100 sq. ft. of living space with four bedrooms, two full and two half baths, grand master suite with walk-in closet and sitting room, open floor plan with gourmet kitchen, formal dining area, formal living room and oversized family room with vaulted ceiling. Multiple French doors access the backyard from surrounding rooms. Sparkling hardwood floors and designer touches can be appreciated throughout. The location is within minutes to schools, shopping and within walking distance to Ranch Laguna Park and Camino Pablo Elementary School.

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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	12	\$700,000	\$2,015,000
MORAGA	5	\$1,120,000	\$1,800,000
ORINDA	10	\$965,000	\$3,325,000

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

- 3346 Betty Lane, \$801,000, 4 Bdrms, 2537 SqFt, 1952 YrBl, 3-15-18
 630 Burton Drive, \$1,230,000, 3 Bdrms, 1567 SqFt, 1956 YrBl, 3-9-18;
 Previous Sale: \$91,500, 12-01-76
 561 Francis Drive, \$866,000, 3 Bdrms, 1548 SqFt, 1967 YrBl, 3-9-18;
 Previous Sale: \$794,000, 09-27-17
 3110 Gloria Terrace, \$1,230,000, 3 Bdrms, 1757 SqFt, 1964 YrBl, 3-16-18;
 Previous Sale: \$812,000, 11-21-17
 3342 Helen Lane, \$1,105,000, 3 Bdrms, 1291 SqFt, 1952 YrBl, 3-9-18;
 Previous Sale: \$870,000, 07-14-16
 1116 Hillcrest Drive, \$1,260,000, 3 Bdrms, 1637 SqFt, 1955 YrBl, 3-9-18;
 Previous Sale: \$553,000, 07-12-00
 105 Marsha Place, \$1,300,000, 4 Bdrms, 1720 SqFt, 1962 YrBl, 3-15-18;
 Previous Sale: \$818,000, 09-10-04
 1309 Martino Road, \$2,015,000, 5 Bdrms, 4114 SqFt, 1975 YrBl, 3-16-18;
 Previous Sale: \$775,000, 03-25-97
 793 Moraga Road, \$700,000, 2 Bdrms, 1057 SqFt, 1954 YrBl, 3-9-18
 681 Old Jonas Hill Road, \$1,550,000, 3 Bdrms, 2553 SqFt, 1968 YrBl, 3-9-18
 1084 Sierra Vista Way, \$1,377,000, 3 Bdrms, 1713 SqFt, 1954 YrBl, 3-13-18;
 Previous Sale: \$825,000, 10-27-04
 3328 Stage Coach Drive, \$1,875,000, 3 Bdrms, 3144 SqFt, 1983 YrBl, 3-19-18;
 Previous Sale: \$670,000, 08-17-92

MORAGA

- 1170 Alta Mesa Drive, \$1,120,000, 3 Bdrms, 1954 SqFt, 1974 YrBl, 3-15-18;
 Previous Sale: \$475,000, 08-25-00
 415 Belfair Place, \$1,780,000, 4 Bdrms, 2774 SqFt, 1968 YrBl, 3-9-18
 714 Camino Ricardo, \$1,215,000, 3 Bdrms, 1546 SqFt, 1965 YrBl, 3-15-18;
 Previous Sale: \$380,000, 09-29-94
 1206 Rimer Drive, \$1,800,000, 5 Bdrms, 3228 SqFt, 1966 YrBl, 3-16-18;
 Previous Sale: \$884,000, 06-21-02
 20 Tia Place, \$1,300,000, 3 Bdrms, 1910 SqFt, 1967 YrBl, 3-16-18

... continued on page D12

COMING SOON

LAFAYETTE



854 SOLANA DRIVE
LIST PRICE TBD



TRAIL/BURTON VALLEY
OFFERED AT \$1,375,000



521 SILVERADO DRIVE
OFFERED AT \$1,795,000



1195 PLEASANT HILL CIRCLE
OFFERED AT \$1,275,000



TRAIL/BURTON VALLEY
OFFER AT \$1,395,000



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JUST LISTED

4 Buckingham Drive, Moraga

3 Bed 2 bath

\$1,095,000

4BuckinghamDr.com

Charm abounds throughout this darling updated 1,532+/- sq ft traditional home. Situated on a .23+/- acre lot with back access to Moraga's rolling hills, the setting is beautiful. The serene backyard oasis offers a lovely seating area, a hot tub and a greenhouse for fresh herbs and plants and a second covered dining area. The short jaunt to top-rated schools, shops, coffee & hiking trails reflects its ideal central location.

Living & Selling Lamorinda



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Unit 3 1 Bed 1 Bath 500 Sq Ft



Unit 4 2 Bed 1 Bath 665 Sq Ft



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Unit 6 2 Bed 1 Bath 940 Sq Ft
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Paddy Kehoe
925.878.5869
paddy@paddykehoeteam.com
DRE 01894345



Claudia Gohler
925.765.8081
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FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

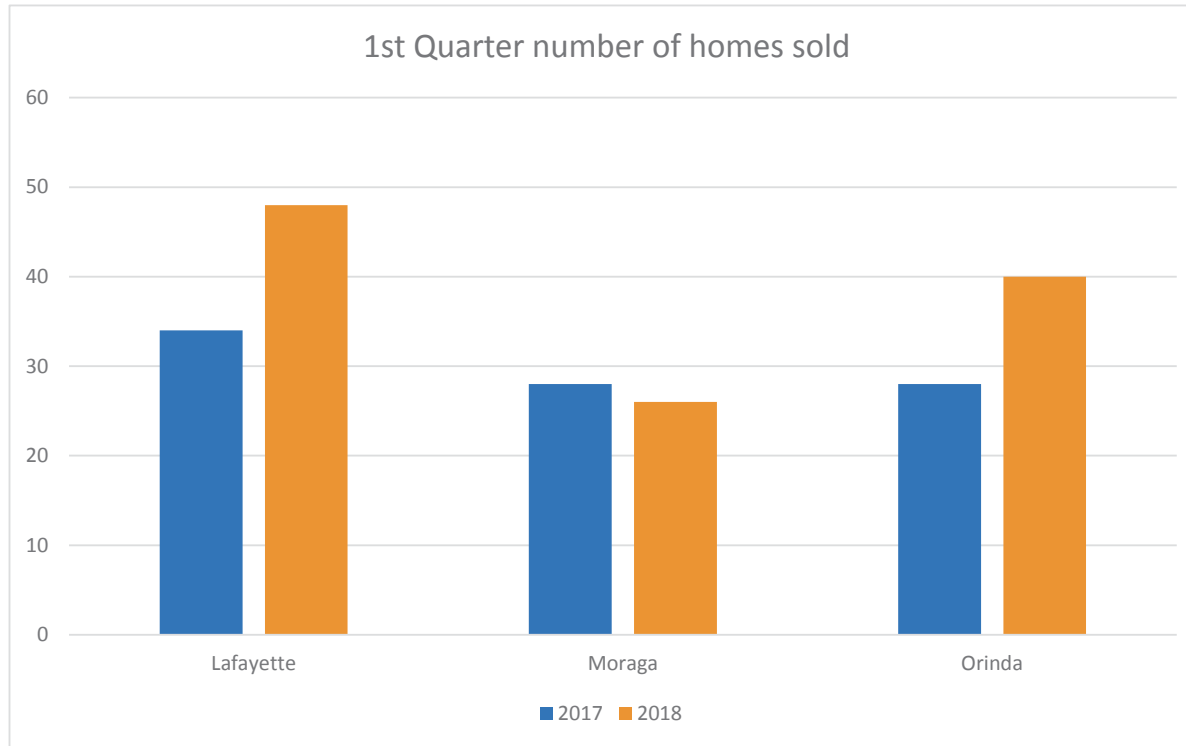


Amy Rose Smith
Village Associates
925.212.3897
amy@amyrosesmith.com
www.amyrosesmith.com
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The real estate quarter in review

By Conrad Bassett, CRP, GMS-T



The first quarter of 2018 showed a continued fast pace in activity on the residential side of Lamorinda real estate. Supply remains low, so the resulting sales quantities remain low. The average sales price continues to increase in Orinda and Moraga but not in Lafayette, versus this time last year. The days on market remain short and the homes that have multiple offers are increasing.

Per Contra Costa Association of Realtors statistics reported from Jan. 1 through March 31, 48 single-family homes closed in Lafayette, up from 34 that closed in the same quarter of 2017. Sales prices ranged from \$675,000 to \$3.6 million and the average number of days on market was 13. The average sales price was \$1,469,744, which was the lowest since 2015 when it was \$1,411,281. In the year ago first quarter it was \$1,622,848 and in 2016 \$1,570,712.

This more reflects the first quarter closings of lower priced homes versus a downturn in average values.

In Moraga the number of single-family closings was at 26, similar to the 28 in 2017 and 20 in the first quarter of 2016. Prices so far this year ranged from \$890,000 to \$2.55 million. The average sale price was \$1,534,007, the highest it has been in a first quarter

ever. A year ago it was \$1,381,452, and in 1Q2016 it was \$1,278,575. In 1Q2015 it was \$1,195,451. The average marketing time was 16 days ... far below the 36 days of a year ago.

This was the first time in recent years that the aver-

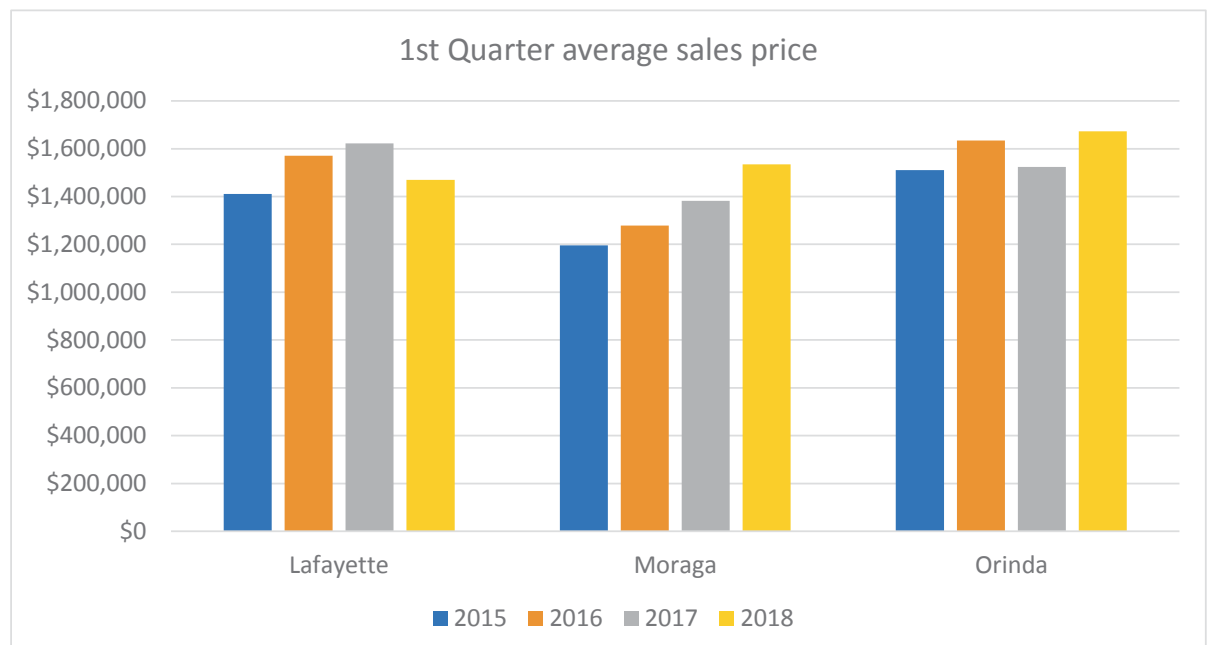
age sales price was higher in Moraga than Lafayette.

In Orinda, the number of single-family closings was 40; a year ago it was 28. Sales prices ranged from \$850,000 to \$4 million with an average price of \$1,673,088. In 2017 it was \$1,523,767. In the 2016 first quarter it was \$1,634,327. In 2015 it was \$1,511,044. It took an average of 43 days on the market to sell a home in Orinda where a year ago it took 24 days.

In the first quarter of 2018, Lafayette homes sold at an average of \$683.73 per square foot, up from \$645.43 per square foot up in 2017 and from \$615.46 per square foot in 2016. Moraga came in at \$607.64, about a 10 percent increase from 1Q2017 when it was \$552.98 per square foot. Orinda was consistent at \$616.89, compared with \$625.23 in the first quarter of 2017 and up from \$581.86 in 2016.

In the condominium/town home category, Lafayette had three closings reported to the MLS and all were resales. They ranged from \$875,000 to \$2.4 million. Moraga had 13 ranging from \$360,000 to \$1.12 million with the highest one being on Alta Mesa. Orinda had one – on Village Gate Road that traded at \$1.1 million.

As of April 9, there were 95 homes under contract per the MLS in the three combined communities (a year ago there were also 95) with asking prices of \$419,000 to \$16.5 million. ... continued on next



Inventory is at 95 as of April 9, versus 96 on the same date a year ago.

There are 34 Lafayette properties currently on the market versus 39 properties on the market in April last year. Asking prices in Lafayette currently range from \$741,946 to \$5.695 million. In Moraga, buyers have their choice of 18 homes, up from 16 homes at this time in 2017.

In Orinda there are 43 homes on the market. A year ago there were 42. The list prices range from \$749,000 to \$4.75 million.

There is only one distressed (bank-owned or a short sale) sale available in Lamorinda.

As is the case nearly every quarter, the most active price range is in the more “affordable” price ranges. At the high end, 21 homes sold above \$2 million in the three communities combined. A year ago there were 13. There are 43 currently available above this amount in Lamorinda.

Interest rates have risen slightly but this has not seemed to slow the migration of families to the area. Lamorinda continues to be attractive and many corporations continue to relocate families both into and out of the area. The real estate markets in San Francisco, the Peninsula, and the other side of the hill in Oakland, Berkeley and Piedmont have been even more active, so there has been some spillover effect where buyers are willing to make longer commutes in order to find more “affordable housing.” Of course, Lamorinda and affordable housing are seldom mentioned in the same breath.

Lastly, it is important to look at what homes are selling for versus their list prices. Often homes come on the market at unrealistic prices and they do not sell. We also are seeing more homes listed well below true values so that it may encourage bidding wars that might generate a higher overall sales price. In the first quarter of this year many homes have had multiple offers and have sold at or above the list price.

Of the 48 single-family home sales that closed in Lafayette in the first quarter of 2018, 40 sold at or above the list price. In Moraga, 17 of the 26 sales were at or above the asking price and in Orinda, 31 of the 40 sold at or above the final listing price. In the detached home category in the first quarter of 2018, the average sale price in Lafayette was 105.75 percent of the asking price. In Moraga it was 102.6 percent and in Orinda it was 102.8 percent of the final asking price.

This will typically happen when a house goes pending in the first two weeks on the market. Of the 95 currently pending sales in the three Lamorinda communities combined, 54 went pending in 21 days or less. The actual average days on the market would be markedly lower, but many agents are setting up marketing plans where they hold the home open to the public and to brokers and follow with an offer date in a week or so after exposing the property to the market – pointing to a high likelihood of a continued trend in homes selling above the asking price.



148 Donald Drive, Moraga
Listed for \$1,495,000
Sold for \$1,575,000

Multiple, multiples in Moraga



351 Calle La Mesa, Moraga
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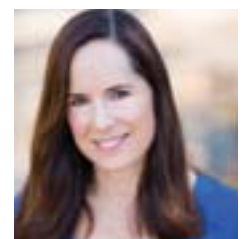
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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

... continued from page D2

ORINDA

- 69 Barbara Road, \$1,238,000, 3 Bdrms, 2216 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 3-14-18;
Previous Sale: \$706,500, 08-15-03
- 22 Coffee Berry Lane, \$2,095,000, 4 Bdrms, 3461 SqFt, 2016 YrBlt, 3-15-18;
Previous Sale: \$24,440,000, 12-30-15
- 115 Coral Drive, \$1,310,500, 3 Bdrms, 1340 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 3-15-18;
Previous Sale: \$1,125,000, 07-13-15
- 9 Las Mesas Path, \$965,000, 3 Bdrms, 1144 SqFt, 1939 YrBlt, 3-13-18;
Previous Sale: \$920,000, 11-15-17
- 11 Los Cerros, \$1,750,000, 4 Bdrms, 2959 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 3-19-18;
Previous Sale: \$1,187,000, 04-02-14
- 119 Melody Lane, \$3,325,000, 5 Bdrms, 6844 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 3-14-18
- 726 Miner Road, \$1,995,000, 4 Bdrms, 3109 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 3-16-18;
Previous Sale: \$1,001,000, 09-12-00
- 14 St. Stephens Drive, \$1,750,000, 5 Bdrms, 3808 SqFt, 2016 YrBlt, 3-19-18;
Previous Sale: \$1,155,000, 04-13-06
- 24 Warford Terrace, \$2,365,000, 3 Bdrms, 2760 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 3-12-18;
Previous Sale: \$395,500, 04-27-94
- 18 Wilder Road, \$2,330,000, 4 Bdrms, 3940 SqFt, 2016 YrBlt, 3-15-18



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959FourthStreet.com



Nancy Rothman

510 701 0230
nrothman@pacunion.com
nancyrothman.com
License #: 01016626



Dan Walner

510 205 7159
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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

The language of trees

By Cynthia Brian

"The ax forgets, the tree remembers." African Proverb



A flowering cherry thrives next to California redwoods and golden poppies.

Photo Cynthia Brian

Do trees have feelings? Do they communicate with one another? As I watch the leaves unfurl and the blossoms bursting on the trees in my landscape, I have a sense that my trees are talking and communing with one another. With the celebration of Earth Day on the horizon, this was an opportune moment to research the language of trees.

At the insistence of his wife, German forester Peter Wohleben authored an accidental bestseller, "The

Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate." The two of them live in a cabin in the remote village of Hummel where Peter manages a nature reserve. He has become a spokesman of sorts for protecting and respecting the rights of trees.

Although trees don't form words as humans do, they do communicate, and are more alert, sophisticated, and social than we expected. Trees form alliances with other trees of both their own species and others

to survive and thrive. They connect via underground fungal mycorrhizal networks, a symbiotic relationship between tree roots and fungi. As they scavenge for nitrogen, phosphorus, and other nutrients, the fungi consume 30 percent of the sugar photosynthesized from sunlight then feed the trees. This fungal internet of thin threads known as mycelium can also transport toxins to keep competing plants from establishing nearby. Eucalyptus and sycamore commonly exhibit this behavior. Biologists have termed fungi-to-tree communication the "wood wide web," showcasing how interconnected and interdependent nature is.

Using pheromones and scent signals, trees also talk through the air. Research was done several years ago with acacias on the savannas of Africa. When giraffes began chewing on the leaves of the thorny acacia, the tree sensed the wound sending a distress signal in the form of ethylene gas to neighboring acacias. The trees receiving the message of imminent danger pumped quantities of tannins into their leaves, which can kill an herbivore.

Trees differentiate between an animal attack and a human cutting a limb. When a branch breaks or is sawed off, the tree sends chemicals to heal the wound. And trees remember.

Trees also have a sense of smell and taste. When an elm or pine is attacked by leaf-eating caterpillars, the affected trees detect the saliva. Pheromones are released to attract parasitic wasps. The wasps lay eggs inside the caterpillars, and the wasp larvae eat the caterpillars from the inside out.

Dr. Suzanne Simard, a forest ecologist with the University of British Columbia is renowned for her extensive scientific research into mycorrhizal networks and "hub trees" or "mother trees" as she prefers to call the biggest, oldest forest trees. Mother trees are not necessarily female but they do have the most fungal connections to nurture and support the saplings. Their deep roots suck up water and send it to fellow trees along with other nutrients and distress warnings. Her lab studies found that defense signals traveled between a diversity of trees within six hours. Not all scientists agree with Simard and Wohleben that trees are sentient beings.

... continued on page D16

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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

The language of trees

... continued from page D14



A beautiful birdhouse nestled next to the heavenly bamboo attracts residents for spring.



Loquat fruit and wisteria form a bond.

Photos Cynthia Brian

Several scientists have countered that plants and trees do not possess intelligence and are instead genetically programmed by natural selection to do a job automatically.

Being the nature aficionado that I am, I vote for team Simard and Wohleben. Over the past few years I've been carefully studying my hillside pine trees as they twist to be closer to each other. Although each tree was originally planted to give a wide berth for each

canopy to grow straight and tall in an effort to reach optimum sunlight, as the trees matured they tended to gravitate toward one another, mingling their branches. The pine that was planted furthest away from its siblings actually lurched sideways forming an arch until its branches touched the closest pine. I can't help but think that this small group considers itself a forest family or at least very dear friends. When my "mother" Japanese maple leafs out, the other two develop their

leaves within two days. My fruit trees of the same species always bloom together as if on orchestral cue. The willows in the creek appear to be supporting the oaks and bays with a communal sharing of resources.

Simard detects a spiritual expression in the forest and Wohleben has been accused of being a tree hugger, although he states that he doesn't believe trees respond to human hugs.

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The Japanese maples show their leaves as the freesia and woodland hyacinth fill the landscape surrounding the green grass.

Photo Cynthia Brian

We do know for certain that trees provide beauty while cleaning the air, combating climate change, and absorbing CO₂. They provide oxygen, keep us cool, prevent erosion, supply us with food, offer playtime for kids, and help us heal faster. Trees furnish us with wood for homes, furniture, and warmth while allowing wildlife to flourish and reside in their branches. An

area without trees feels arid, vulnerable and ugly.

Trees are our allies and they are definitely talking to us. Clear cutting and climate change will kill our trees and our forests. We need to plant trees to capture carbon and encourage kids of all ages to climb big trees. We need to acknowledge that global warming is real and that our trees are desperately warning us of

the disasters to come if we don't create a movement for change. We need to listen to our vegetation as their memories are living, long, and lasting.

We are all one interdependent, interconnected community. Stop. Look. Listen. Learn the language of trees and celebrate Earth Day with me.

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Cynthia Brian's mid-month gardening guide for April

- **VISIT** Wildlife Earth Day at Wagner Ranch in Orinda on Sunday, April 22 from 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Several community organizations will also present earth-friendly endeavors. I will be autographing my newest book, "Growing with the Goddess Gardener" as well as talking about trees, flowers, and other botanicals. For more information on this nature-lover's event organized by the naturalist guru, Toris Jaeger, visit <https://fwrna.org/wildlifefest/>.
- **ENJOY** the lilacs and wisteria in full bloom.
- **WATCH** the leaves unfurl on your deciduous trees and become more aware of how different species of trees support one another.
- **REMOVE** old foliage around the new growth of perennials.
- **PREVENT** disease and rotting by keeping mulch several inches away from stems of plants and shrubs.
- **CREATE** a habitat for birds that prefer staying close to the ground by making a small pile of twigs and clippings in your side yard. You'll attract white-throated sparrows and dark-eyed juncos.
- **ADD** a clean birdhouse to your landscape for birds to make their nests. You'll be the beneficiary of joyful tweets and twerps.
- **UTILIZE** the monthly gardening tips in the book, "Growing with the Goddess Gardener" available with free seeds, herbs, and more from <http://www.CynthiaBrian.com/online-store>.
- **FERTILIZE** fruit trees with a high nitrogen organic fertilizer. Best time is right before the bud break, although trees that need food can be fertilized through June. Don't fertilize in summer or fall.
- **PICK** tulips for indoor vases.
- **BUY** discounted baseball tickets to the June 15 Oakland A's versus Los Angeles Angels directly at <https://groupmatics.events/event/Bestar> with a portion of proceeds benefitting the 501 c3 charity, Be the Star You Are® <http://www.BetheStarYouAre.org>
- **SCATTER** pollinator friendly wild flower seeds to celebrate Earth Day.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.



This pine tree is stretching to be with its other pine family of trees creating an arch.

Photos Cynthia Brian



Blue, purple pink, white, and green are all part of one hydrangea.



A look inside the face of a yellow tulip!



Pretty in pink, Cynthia Brian loves her purple African daisies.

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.

Available for hire for projects and lectures.

Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com

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24 Camino Sobrante
Luxury appointments w/ comfortable charm! 4 Bed/2 Bath, remodeled kitchen & delightful outdoor living.

\$1,565,000

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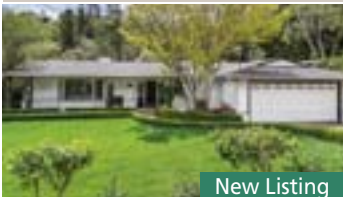


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188 Hall Drive
Spacious, sun-filled home on private acre lot. Walls of windows! Charming patio & lawn. Enjoy top schools.

\$1,695,000

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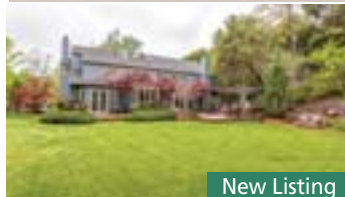


New Listing

112 Sleepy Hollow Lane
Sleepy Hollow Splendor! Gorgeous single story with stunning backyard. 5Bed/2.5 Bath/3166 sq.ft.

\$2,550,000

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New Listing

14 Valley Court
Stunning custom built 3950 sq.ft. home. Gorgeous 1/2 acre private knoll. Walk to Glorietta Elementary, Swim/Tennis.

\$2,595,000

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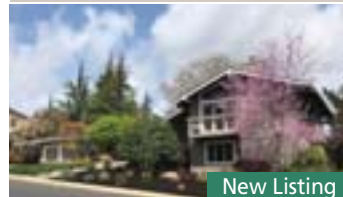


New Listing

2 Modoc Road
Enchanting, private 8.9 acre Orinda estate. +/- 3500 sq ft/ 5+ Bed/4.5 Bath with 930 SqFt detached barn.

\$3,195,000

MORAGA

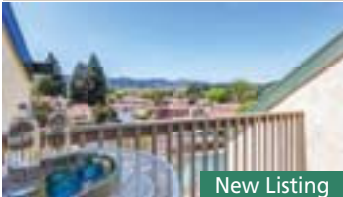


New Listing

501 Fernwood Drive
Turnkey Rheem Valley Manor 5bd/2.5ba 2,757 sq.ft. executive rancher with level lawn, pool and views.

Call For Price

MORAGA

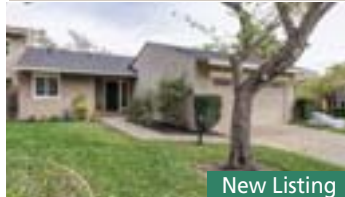


New Listing

1043 Alta Mesa Drive
Fully updated town home with modern flair. Vaulted ceilings, attached garage. Bonus office in Master Suite

\$865,000

MORAGA



New Listing

2 Baltusrol Street
Favorite Single-Level Plan 2 in MCC. Updated throughout- kitchen & baths, new roof, & floors!

\$925,000

MORAGA



New Listing

56 Sullivan Drive
Gorgeous, updated with spectacular yard. 5Bed/ 3Baths, beautiful kitchen, separate outdoor bonus office.

\$1,625,000

LAFAYETTE

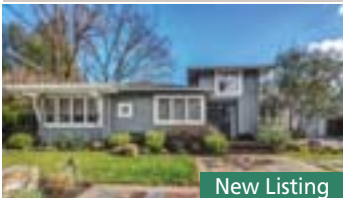


Coming Soon

3519 S. Silver Springs Road
Classic rancher in coveted Silver Springs neighborhood.

Call For Price

LAFAYETTE



New Listing

860 Broadmoor Court
Truly special one level living. 5Beds/3.5Baths, modern kitchen, fabulous backyard, bonus in-law/ nanny unit!

\$2,479,000

LAFAYETTE

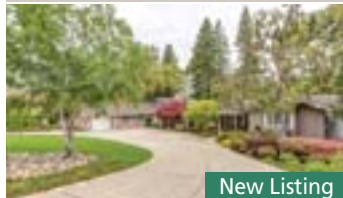


New Listing

1740 Toyon Road
Modern Mediterranean Elegance. 5 bed, 4 .5 bath, 4,306 sqft. Incredible views& open floor plan for entertaining.

\$2,499,000

LAFAYETTE

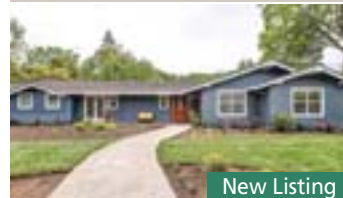


New Listing

3512 S. Silver Springs Road
Fabulous home in coveted Silver Springs neighborhood. 6+ Bed/4 Bath. Indoor/Outdoor living.

\$2,750,000

ALAMO



New Listing

21 Gran Via
Amazing home and location! 5 Bed/4.5 Bath updated ranch. Park like lot with pool, sport court, patio.

\$1,995,000

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