

# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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*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](http://www.bringingbackthenatives.net).