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Lafayette Garden Club hosts its Artful Garden Tour in May

By Jenn Freedman



Geranium-filled window boxes Photos provided

The Lafayette Garden Club will host its Artful Gardens Tour over Mother's Day weekend on Saturday May 12, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The self-guided tour will explore five magnificent Lamorinda gardens at the height of their spring glory, plus offer a pop-up market and plant sale.

The garden club was founded almost 50 years ago and has over 140 members, making it one of the largest garden clubs in the Bay Area. After a long hiatus, the club has brought back the garden tour as their primary fundraiser this year. "We felt it was a great opportunity to get the community and our members involved and have some fun together," explain co-chairs Laurie Reich, Melinda Flanders, Chris Voll Chernin, and Laurie Callaway. "The tour can give you good ideas of what you might want to do in your garden, teach you about new plants, and offer a fun day out with friends and family."

Proceeds from the garden tour benefit local school horticultural projects, Lafayette beautification projects, and other local nonprofits.

One of the tour highlights is an eclectic treasure in Lafayette developed over 25 years: an artist's personal creation filled with rustic antiques and extensive plant varieties. Geranium-filled window boxes charm visitors as they transition from the home to the surrounding gardens. The winding, interconnected spaces are each enclosed by a noteworthy relic, from an antique arbor to a wrought-iron fence to a stone wall. Over 100 rose bushes of various types are planted throughout the garden and climb its many arbors.

The garden is continually evolving with new delights. Inspired by a recent trip to Spain, the latest garden addition is a Moroccan soaking pool surrounded by a patio made with reclaimed bricks and tropical plants including pygmy date palms, asparagus ferns, shell ginger, and princess flowers. The new hillside garden features drought tolerant and California natives, including cranesbill geranium, smoke bush, and various sages.

Another notable stop on the tour is an Orinda garden that is truly an art-filled paradise: a stunning one-acre estate masterfully interlaced with texture, color, and sculptures collected from local and internationally-renowned artists. Established in 1979, the land was once covered in blackberries and poison oak before its dramatic transformation. In the lower garden, a sculpture of David peeks over the hornbeam and camellia hedges. The spaces in this area are designed into color-themed "rooms." The red room features red camellias, the yellow room springs yellow roses, the blue room includes clematis, and the orange room contains roses, dahlias, coppertips, zinnias, wallflowers and cannas.

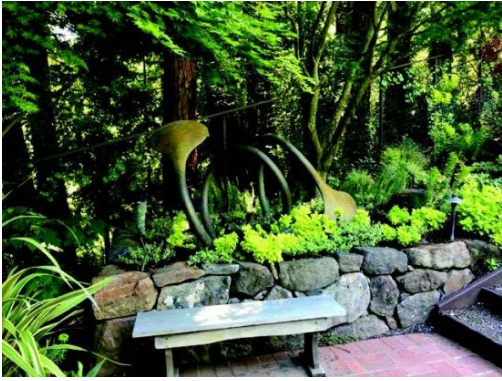
The upper garden incorporates weathered steel accents, shade-loving perennials, and more sculptures, of course. The stone and steel terraced hillside highlight ornamental grasses, allium, sage, bearded iris, roses and smoke bush.

The pop-up market and plant sale will be located at one of the other gardens on the tour. The market will feature local artisans' treasures including botanical art, jewelry, ceramics, and specialty food items. The plant sale will feature plants propagated by club members.

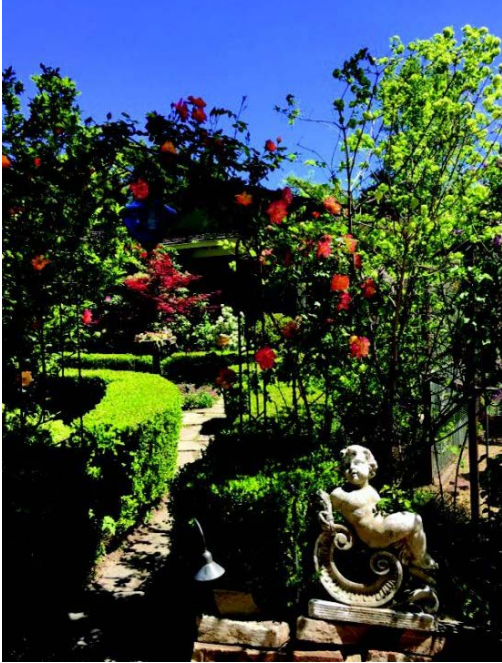
The self-guided tour visits four Lafayette gardens and one Orinda garden. In addition to the two gardens described above, visitors will also enjoy a family-friendly delight in Happy Valley, an elegant retreat also in Happy Valley, and a California cottage garden near downtown Lafayette. Visitors can drive to three gardens; shuttles will transport guests to the other two gardens. The starting point will be designated on tickets.

Tickets are tax-deductible and cost \$40 each, or \$35 each when four or more are purchased. They may be purchased online at the club's website, lafayettegardenclub.com, in person at The Lazy K at Orchard Nursery, or via mail by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope and check to the Lafayette Garden Club, P. O. Box 294, Lafayette, CA, 94549. Tickets are limited and the tour will take place rain or shine.

For further information, go to lafayettegardenclub.com.



This sculpture finds its home in this shade garden



Roses climb this antique arbor

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