



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

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Achieve divine design by avoiding these five common decorating don'ts



Make sure the area rug you purchase is the right size for the space, like in this home.

Photo provided

By Amanda Eck

After being in the design industry for over a decade and visiting a myriad of client's homes there are a few design mistakes I find quite often. Today I thought I'd share five common decorating mistakes. No judgment here, just

some tips that might be useful to you.

1) Art hung too high. I see this mistake often. It seems trivial, but even a piece of art hung a few inches too high can make a whole room feel "off." Many like to use the rule of thumb of hanging art at eye level, but I think even

that can feel off, especially if you're above average or below average height. I prefer to hang art in proportion to the furniture piece it is above (i.e. dresser, sofa, bed, et cetera). The size of the art will also make a difference. A larger piece will obviously be able to hang higher than a smaller one. For instance, if it's a sofa or a headboard, start with 5 inches to 8 inches between the top of the furniture and the bottom of the art. Also take into consideration the height of your ceilings. Lower 8-foot ceilings you may want less space between the furniture piece versus higher ceilings. I still prefer to err on the side of hanging the piece lower and closer to the furniture.

2) Decorating around something you don't love. I hear it all the time: "I don't love the oriental rug (or whatever) but it was my mother's (or it cost a lot of money) so I kept it." The problem with decorating around something you don't love results in a room you don't love. And if you read my article last month you know where I stand on this. It's okay to let those pieces go if you do not love them. Or at least move them to a space that you use the least. Life is too short to live with items that don't bring you joy.

3) Choosing color first. Without doubt, color is the biggest thing I find people get wrong. Color is not easy and most homeowners can find it challenging to select. A common mistake is choosing the wall color first before anything else is in the room. I always tell clients it is much easier to match a paint color to a fabric, a rug or art, than it is to match the fabric, rug or art to your wall color.

... continued on Page D4

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Lamorinda home sales recorded

City	Last reported	Lowest amount	Highest amount
LAFAYETTE	10	\$995,000	\$3,848,000
MORAGA	6	\$390,000	\$2,225,000
ORINDA	10	\$1,050,000	\$2,525,000

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.

LAFAYETTE2427 Cherry Hills Drive, \$995,000, 4 Bdrms, 1855 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 02-22-19,
Previous Sale: \$825,000, 09-04-153366 Kim Road, \$3,848,000, 3 Bdrms, 2419 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 02-15-19,
Previous Sale: \$970,000, 03-22-17697 Los Palos Drive, \$2,875,000, 5 Bdrms, 3365 SqFt, 1947 YrBlt, 02-22-19,
Previous Sale: \$410,000, 04-01-911455 Purson Lane, \$1,135,000, 3 Bdrms, 3378 SqFt, 1997 YrBlt, 02-22-19,
Previous Sale: \$1,015,000, 09-09-16

4 Red Bark Court, \$1,705,000, 4 Bdrms, 2906 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 02-21-19

639 Sky Hy Circle, \$1,620,000, 6 Bdrms, 3061 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 02-11-19

1055 Silverhill Drive, \$1,395,000, 3 Bdrms, 3354 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 02-20-19,
Previous Sale: \$695,000, 09-30-99

3318 Stage Coach Drive, \$2,075,000, 4 Bdrms, 3384 SqFt, 1983 YrBlt, 02-12-19

3749 Sundale Road, \$1,050,000, 3 Bdrms, 1295 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 02-20-19,
Previous Sale: \$729,000, 05-22-07115 Wilderness Lane, \$3,365,000, 4 Bdrms, 4284 SqFt, 2017 YrBlt, 02-22-19,
Previous Sale: \$4,195,000, 04-28-15**Moraga**2059 Ascot Drive #109, \$390,000, 1 Bdrms, 713 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 02-20-19,
Previous Sale: \$265,000, 12-03-14

21 Dickenson Drive, \$1,050,000, 3 Bdrms, 1591 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 02-19-19

10 Doral Drive, \$959,000, 2 Bdrms, 2238 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 02-11-19,
Previous Sale: \$372,500, 01-10-0176 Lynwood Place, \$1,750,000, 4 Bdrms, 2971 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 02-15-19,
Previous Sale: \$1,650,000, 11-15-16120 Merion Terrace, \$1,205,000, 3 Bdrms, 2725 SqFt, 1988 YrBlt, 02-20-19,
Previous Sale: \$985,000, 02-13-141795 Saint Andrews Drive, \$1,520,000, 3 Bdrms, 2828 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt,
02-11-19, Previous Sale: \$1,125,000, 04-03-18226 Willowbrook Lane, \$2,225,000, 4 Bdrms, 3205 SqFt, 2017
YrBlt, 02-21-19, Previous Sale: \$2,057,000, 01-29-18**Orinda**12 Bates Boulevard, \$1,425,000, 3 Bdrms, 1897 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 02-22-19,
Previous Sale: \$930,000, 11-14-13

58 Brookside Road, \$1,800,000, 3 Bdrms, 3190 SqFt, 1946 YrBlt, 02-15-19

3 La Cintilla, \$1,249,000, 4 Bdrms, 2442 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 02-21-19

147 Las Vegas Road, \$2,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 3118 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 02-19-19,
Previous Sale: \$1,708,000, 02-15-08184 Moraga Way, \$1,565,000, 3 Bdrms, 2679 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 02-19-19,
Previous Sale: \$1,215,000, 06-15-0614 Oak Road, \$1,350,000, 3 Bdrms, 2702 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 02-12-19,
Previous Sale: \$1,295,000, 08-25-05

151 Ravenhill Road, \$1,100,000, 3 Bdrms, 2245 SqFt, 1982 YrBlt, 02-22-19

235 Sundown Terrace, \$2,525,000, 4 Bdrms, 3802 SqFt, 1988 YrBlt, 02-21-19,
Previous Sale: \$655,000, 06-01-89

8 Wanfleete Court, \$1,050,000, 3 Bdrms, 1597 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 02-13-19

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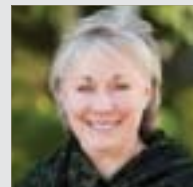
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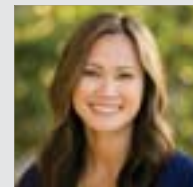
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Mortgage Rates Are Falling

As our Spring real estate market kicks into high gear potential homebuyers just got an early treat from the Easter Bunny with a big drop in interest rates. According to Bankrate.com latest survey of national mortgage lenders, the 30-year mortgage rate sank 27 basis points last week to 4.17%, the biggest weekly drop in a decade. The last time the benchmark 30-year rate was below this level was Jan. 3, 2018 when it hit 4.1 percent, according to Bankrate's historical data. Since last November mortgage rates have almost dropped a full percentage point when the benchmark rate was just short of 5.0%. While the above rates are national averages local lenders have recently quoted 30-year fixed rate jumbo loans at 3.75%, 10/1 ARMs at 3.25% and 7/1 ARMs at 3.125% (all with no points and fees).

This huge drop in rates comes on the heels of the Federal Reserve announcing last month to keep rates steady and signaling no more rate increases for the rest of the year. This welcome news comes just in time for the Spring market and a great opportunity to refinance your current mortgage.

We look forward to hearing from you with your real estate questions.



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Achieve divine design by avoiding these five common decorating don'ts



... continued from Page D1

4) Choosing a rug that is too small for the space. I like to call it Rug Island. You know, where the rug floats in the center of the room not touching a single piece of furniture? I understand that rugs can be a large investment and many of us have kiddos and prefer not to spend a lot on a rug so we opt for an inexpensive 5 X 8 size. A great way to save on cost is to have a local carpet store make a rug out of broadloom. For living rooms a good rule of thumb is to either have all the furniture pieces on the rug or at least have all the front legs of the furniture on the rug.

5) Piecemeal decorating. Often times when I go to a consult the client is stuck moving forward because they started to decorate without a plan. Maybe they recently moved into their new home and quickly ran out to purchase a sofa and chairs or ordered a rug online and realized the color was wrong. Then they tried to use their existing coffee table but it now feels too small for the space. And now they find themselves struggling to make things "work." Decorating piecemeal or buying things one at a time is the most difficult way to decorate. Having a plan in place with room measurements and fabric swatches will ensure that less mistakes will be made. Even if you are unable to purchase all the items at once, it is still better to have the plan in place

and purchase as your time and budget allows. This is why clients love our Designer Day package, because they can hire us to create the plan and they are able to execute it when they are ready.

If you have made one or more of these mistakes please know that we've all been there! And when in doubt, Google it! There is a plethora of information at our fingertips that 15 years ago didn't exist. I'll leave you with one of my favorite quotes from designer Charles Eames: "The details are not the details. They make the design." Until next time dear friends!

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.

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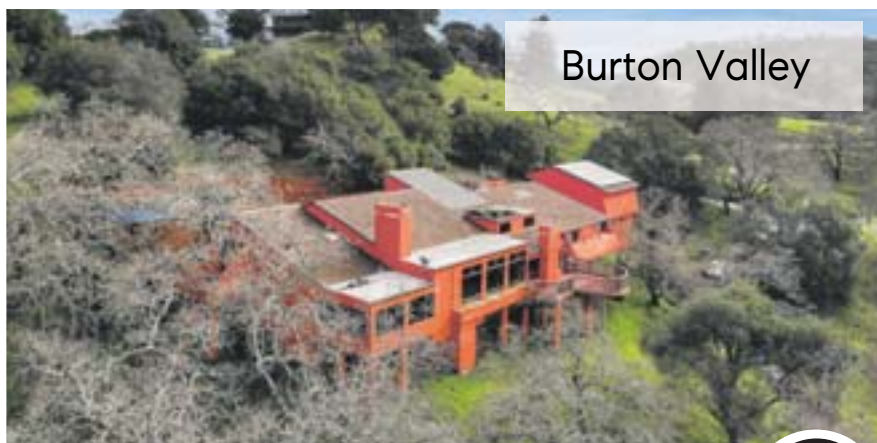
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Under a redwood tree, acid-loving plants flourish including ferns, azaleas, camellias, and rhododendrons.

By Cynthia Brian

After sowing seeds of beets, arugula, Swiss chard and leeks, I sat on my small white wooden bench to watch. Within minutes a black and white king snake slithered by my foot sending shivers up my spine at the sudden surprise yet joy because I know that king snakes keep rattlers away. A tailless baby lizard scampered to a rock to bask in the sunshine, and a chorus of frogs croaked their mating calls, each attempting to outdo the other. Two moths flitted through the nasturtiums, a swarm of honeybees gathered on the rosemary, and a clew of worms tilled the

rich soil. A covey of quail called to one another, landing in my chestnut tree. My vegetable garden was alive with congenial visiting helpers.

For years Fred Rogers modeled the benefits of caring on his award-winning children's program, "Mister Rogers Neighborhood." The root principle of his teachings was to be a good neighbor and find helpers. Having friendly, helpful neighbors is good not only for humans but for plants and animals, too. We are all interdependent on one another for survival. To fully understand how important buddies are, we need to look no further than the kingdom of plants.

In gardening, we call this companion planting. Health and yields are improved when certain plants are grown together. Some plants will attract beneficial insects while others will repel destructive ones. Certain flowers, vegetables, and herbs grown together will produce more beautiful flowers and flavorful edibles than if grown in solitary confinement.

When planning your companion garden, for the team to thrive, it is important to consider these critical requirements. Determine if they enjoy the same type of soil (sandy, loamy, clay, silty, peaty), light exposure (shade, partial shade, full sun, partial sun), water (how much and how often), and pest control.

Soil: The ideal garden soil is loam as it is a balanced mixture of sand, silt, and clay with plenty of humus. To improve our clay soil, we need to improve the drainage and lighten the heaviness by adding copious amounts of organic matter. A combination of compost, mulch, and cover crops will enrich the soil, prevent erosion and minimize weed growth.

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Dutch iris amidst ferns.

Photos Cynthia Brian



A formal pruned rose garden with companion boxwood hedges begins its spring leafing.

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Light: Record where the sun is during different times of the day. Remember that tall plants will provide shade for smaller plants that need protection.

Water: Roots need oxygen to survive. Waterlogged roots rot. Vegetables require about one inch of water a week, columbines prefer a moist environment, while succulents succeed in drier soils. Determine your own watering personality then choose compatible plants accordingly.

Pest Control: One of the most exciting things about companion planting is how various plants can attract good bugs and deter the bad ones when surrounded by their friends. Alliums are terrific company for almost all plants except asparagus and beans!

When building your garden, think about building a community of friends.

Roses are jewels of the garden for at least three seasons, and, as with their mineral cousins, their beauty is enhanced when placed in the right setting. According to rose expert Michael Marriott, senior rosarian and technical manager of David Austin Roses Ltd. in Albrighton, England, roses are beautifully suited to mixed garden borders. The trick to combining roses successfully with other garden plants lies in knowing which will play well together. Although we don't normally plant roses with our vegetables, rose petals are edible. Gathered early in the morning, they make a tasty topping for salads and soups.

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Favorite Blue Perennials:

Lavender
Blue Eyed Grass
Monkshood
Aster
Bellflower
Cornflower
Delphinium
Sea holly
Geranium
Salvia
Pincushion flower
Veronica
Viola

Favorite Other Colored Perennials:

Agastache
Candytuft
Chamomile
Columbine
Penstemon
Black-eyed Susan
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Verbena

Favorite Biennial

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Poppy
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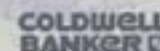
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The best partners, he says, bloom exactly together or closely overlap. “The joy is in pairing flowers that play off one another when seen side by side in full bloom. The goal is to heighten peak bloom experiences. Extending the bloom season is a different exercise.

Here is a short list of his recommended rose partners.

When it comes to vegetable companions, we have a long list of allies and enemies. General rules advise avoiding planting in long rows or big patches to deter the pests. Instead, interplant with flowers and herbs to confuse the predators and attract the beneficials.

Marigolds are the workhorse of any vegetable planting as they discourage beetles and nematodes. The presence of calendula in any garden is a plus repelling nasty insects while the roots clean the soil by establishing active relationships with soil-borne fungi. Nasturtium, chives and garlic keep away aphids. Dill improves growth and flavor in all plants of the cabbage family including kale while mint will deter ants and cabbage moth and improve the flavor of peas. However, dill will retard the growth of your carrots. Parsley, carrots and parsnip attract praying mantis, ladybugs and spiders that dine on pests. Beans, peas and clover make nitrogen that enrich the soil.

Never plant corn and tomatoes near one another as the identical worm attacks both. If you want potatoes, plant horseradish in the four corners as protection and refrain from including squash, cucumbers or sunflowers in the same location as they all suffer from the same blight. If you are growing strawberries, prevent worms by creating a border of thyme and strengthen resistance to disease and insects with borage. Oregano provides general pest protection while basil ward off flies and mosquitoes while improving (no surprise) the flavor and growth of tomatoes.

Before you start your spring planting, consider the community you will be creating. The rains are continuing, the crabapples are blooming, and the willow buds are set to burst.

Fred Rogers said that maybe heaven is the connections we make while on earth. In gardening as in life, it takes a village.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.



California King snake enjoys living in Cynthia's vegetable garden.



Blue-Eyed Grass is a native nectar plant for the Mission blue butterfly and a great companion for roses, clematis, and New Zealand flax.



Candytuft is a great border plant.

Photos Cynthia Brian



Buds of a willow tree are ready to burst open.



Cynthia Brian takes a break by the sea.

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 her new books, Growing with the Goddess Gardener and Be the Star You Are! Millennials to Boomers at www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store.

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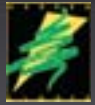
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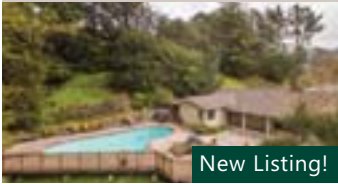
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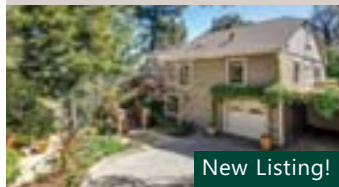
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