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Orinda Garden Club spring tour raises funds for good causes

By Sora O'Doherty



Photos provided

Five private gardens in Orinda and Lafayette will be open to viewing from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. May 9 by those who take the Orinda Garden Club's spring tour, "A Spring Garden Stroll," which benefits the Club's Orinda beautification projects, horticultural scholarships, conservation projects, bouquets for patients at the Contra Costa Regional Medical Center in Martinez, and much more.

Garden One - In a tiny corner of Orindawoods sits a jewel box garden that delights year-round. Originally, the main garden on the side of the house was at the same grade as the family room and contained a large exposed aggregate patio with a wood retaining wall that extended the length of the house on the opposite side of the garden. The deck on the back of the house was much smaller and did not connect with the main garden. By extending the deck around the corner to meet the main patio, the garden was greatly enlarged and now wraps around the house in an easy flow. Pots with seasonal color and lighting add drama to this beautiful little courtyard.

Garden Two - Substantial changes have been made to this garden. The owner loves the contemporary lines of the house and wanted the garden to reflect her taste as well as be a backdrop to a stunning art collection, especially the word "Always" that is spelled out on the hillside. To transform the new garden into a

contemporary space, the owner chose large porcelain tiles and set them off against boulders and small rocks for a complex, bold and dramatic effect. Drought tolerant plants dominate the garden, especially on the slope, and provide texture and color. The restraint used in the composition makes the architecture the focus.

Garden Three (Eugene O'Neill House) - Once a huge expanse of weeds ringed with small olive trees, the front garden was a fairly blank slate when the owners purchased this majestic property. After an extensive remodel of the house, the owners took on a landscaping project to reflect their love of roses, simplicity and elegance. With the installation of the two driveway gates and simple fencing, the front was transformed into a safe, private and flower-filled garden. You will find a range of plants in the garden including fruitless olive trees, iceberg tree roses, nepeta, coral carpet roses, boxwood, sweet olive, rose Sally Holmes, Camellias, beauty berry and citrus trees.

Garden Four - Shortly after purchasing their home, the owners began remodeling the home and the garden together. They reoriented the driveway to the far side of the house and located a new swimming pool and large entertainment area where the driveway was, making the most of the dramatic slope down the property toward the road. The large olive trees fit the scale of the landscape and create a Mediterranean theme. Roses, rosemary, crepe myrtles and agaves on the slope above the pool provide color and interest. From the fire pit midway up the slope, you can enjoy the views of the rolling hills to the West.

Garden Five - Charmed by the gorgeous Black, Valley and Live oak trees and filtered light, the owners fell in love with this property at first sight. A hillside woodland shade garden provides seasonal cut flowers year-round. In the front garden, the owners replaced the standard lawn with a native lawn substitute which uses less water and supports local pollinators. Boxwood globes add structure along with a sense of whimsy. In place of screening and shrub material, the owners brought in a variety of ferns to supplement the existing tree ferns and numerous types of fragrant shrubs which are a feast for the senses.

In addition to visiting the gardens, visitors can enjoy a garden boutique with multiple vendors. Tickets for the tour, which cost \$50, are available at Orinda Books, McDonnell Nursery, and Orchard Nursery, as well as on the tour website (see below). The tour is sponsored by Enchanting Planting and The Beaubelle Group Compass Real Estate.

Info: Purchase tickets online at <http://orindagc.org>.



Pathways add interest in Orinda gardens

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