

# Lamorinda

# OUR HOMES

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## Using Mother Nature against Mother Nature



A living retaining wall sprouts green on the hillside.



Grosoxx was filled with seed and compost.

Photos Gint Federas

**By Jon Kingdon**

After 33 years living in Lafayette in the same house, Gint Federas and his wife, Geni, took on a major landscaping project to halt the erosion of their property. “We originally had a retaining wall which directed the water, but it led to extensive erosion of the land below,” Federas said. “We had a lot of ivy which we removed at the direction of the fire marshal which exposed how serious the erosion problem was.”

This was no small project on a property that measures two-thirds of an acre. Federas, who grew up in an urban environment and now considers himself a “gentleman farmer,” weighed his options as to the best way to stabilize the hill. “I considered building retaining walls with wood or blocks, but I felt it was unsightly and extremely expensive,” Federas said. “So, I did a lot of research on retaining walls and I found someone who was doing creek and river remediation with the heavy-duty polypropylene tubular mesh netting (Grosoxx).” The Grossoxx is designed to stabilize

banks and prevent erosion on waterways and shoreline banks. Besides the ecological benefit of using the Grossoxx, when costed out, it was about 80% cheaper than putting in retaining walls.

The first thing Federas did was to remove the non-native trees. “We cut out all of the pine, palm and other non-native trees. Our plan was to make a “permaculture” where native plants, bushes and trees would not need added water or chemicals to be able to grow anything.”

Federas purchased 16,000 feet (over 3 miles) of the Grossoxx, cutting it into two-to-three-foot lengths, tying off one end and filling it with seed and compost. After mixing 300 pounds of seed and 300 tons of compost, it took Federas and three assistants three months to fill up enough Grossoxx to fill in one half of the hill. Fortunately for Federas, “I discovered a Min-FX machine which is custom made by Filtrexx. It filled up the Grossoxx like a sausage machine, far faster than we could manually.”



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