

# Lamorinda

# OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly

Volume 16

Issue 6

Wednesday, May 11, 2022



Handyman Jim Hurley fixing a doorbell read on Page D4

## Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

### Spring succession



The edible Jerusalem star known as salsify tips its purple flower towards the sun.

#### By Cynthia Brian

*"I'm grateful for the opportunity to live on this beautiful and astonishing Planet Earth. In the morning, I woke up with a sense of gratitude."*  
~ Earl Nightingale

In California, May reigns as one of the most colorful months of the year. Mother Nature has fully awakened from lingering winter doldrums to burst into bloom. The ra-



Photos Cynthia Brian

The elegant foxglove, *Digitalis purpurea*, is toxic to humans.

diant combination of lush green lawns against cheerful vignettes of glowing, flowing flowers, trees and shrubs is mesmerizing. Beauty, fragrance, and food beckon from every direction.

With appreciation, I awake each morning and fall asleep each night to the lullabies from a multitude of songbirds. Pollinators are busy buzzing from nectar plants to other food sources signaling a healthy garden en-

vironment. The succession of blossoms changes daily from spring bulbs to robust roses; bright bearded iris to sprouted seeds scattered last fall.

May is the optimum time to plant annuals, vegetables, and herbs together in a potager garden. By combining a medley of edibles and florals, biological pest control is ignited providing plants to protect one another and be a shelter for beneficial insects. Nasturtium, calendula and marigolds are the colorful workhorses attracting hungry caterpillars and blackflies away from brassicas and beans. Garlic planted between roses, lettuce, potatoes, or even fruit trees will keep the aphids, Japanese beetles and ermine moths at bay. Parsley attracts pollinators and protectors of tomatoes. Mint deters ants and aphids but make sure to plant in a pot as mint can overtake an entire garden. Before planting, weed thoroughly, enrich the soil with compost or add new soil, and rotate crops to maintain vigor while producing greater yields.

Jerusalem star, also known as go-to-bed early, vegetable oyster, or salsify is considered an invasive weed in some areas, but this dandelion-related plant is a forgotten beloved Victorian-era edible that tastes like an oyster and grows like a carrot. Its yellow-flowering relative is named goatsbeard. The taproot grows to 12 inches into the ground. Harvest with care to not break the root. In the kitchen, salsify is versatile and delicious in soups, stews, bisques, casseroles, or grated like beets in a salad for a fresh seafood/artichoke flavor. The entire plant has been used medicinally.

... continued on Page D12





1040 Bollinger Canyon Road, Moraga  
3 BD | 2 BA | 3.99 AC | \$1,595,000

Enjoy the tranquility without compromising proximity to downtown Moraga and Lafayette, freeway access, top-rated schools, or hop on nearby trails to traverse the gorgeous hillsides. The oak-studded land tucked along the Los Trampas Creek is a private sanctuary showcasing an updated single-level home that extends out onto a breathtaking outdoor space professionally landscaped by Quality Gardening Landscaping. The home's open floor plan features a great room with an updated kitchen and lots of natural light. All new plumbing, wiring, dual pane windows, solar panels with a battery backup, a tankless water heater, upgraded insulation, and more create a move-in-ready home!



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## Lamorinda home sales recorded

City	Last reported	Lowest amount	Highest amount
LAFAYETTE	8	\$1,520,000	\$4,350,000
MORAGA	3	\$581,000	\$1,825,000
ORINDA	3	\$2,250,000	\$3,425,000

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.

### LAFAYETTE

- 4139 Coralee Lane, \$2,400,000, 3 Bdrms, 2991 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 03-24-22, Previous Sale: \$1,062,000, 06-26-07
- 21 Jennifer Highlands Court, \$2,125,000, 4 Bdrms, 3813 SqFt, 1996 YrBlt, 03-25-22
- 3729 Meadow Lane, \$4,350,000, 5 Bdrms, 3233 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 03-22-22, Previous Sale: \$873,500, 05-30-08
- 3028 Rohrer Drive, \$2,701,000, 3 Bdrms, 2151 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 03-21-22
- 3107 Sandalwood Court, \$2,800,000, 3 Bdrms, 2111 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 03-21-22, Previous Sale: \$1,070,000, 08-08-13
- 3259 Surmont Drive, \$2,825,000, 4 Bdrms, 2962 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 03-24-22, Previous Sale: \$2,150,000, 11-07-20
- 951 Yorkshire Court, \$1,520,000, 2 Bdrms, 1371 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 03-21-22, Previous Sale: \$379,000, 10-28-99
- 963 Yorkshire Court, \$2,700,000, 3 Bdrms, 1773 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 03-25-22

### MORAGA

- 742 Augusta Drive, \$1,700,000, 3 Bdrms, 1749 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 03-22-22, Previous Sale: \$1,011,000, 07-15-21
- 3 Berkshire Street, \$1,825,000, 3 Bdrms, 1982 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 03-25-22, Previous Sale: \$439,000, 08-06-98
- 820 Villa Lane #3, \$581,000, 2 Bdrms, 952 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 03-23-22, Previous Sale: \$409,000, 07-25-05

### ORINDA

- 89 Lombardy Lane, \$3,425,000, 5 Bdrms, 4543 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 03-22-22, Previous Sale: \$250,000, 02-12-19
- 48 Oak Road, \$2,470,000, 3 Bdrms, 3165 SqFt, 1992 YrBlt, 03-22-22
- 508 The Glade, \$2,250,000, 3 Bdrms, 2409 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 03-22-22, Previous Sale: \$1,225,000, 09-17-07

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# Fixing old fashioned doorbells



Photo provided

**By Jim Hurley**

A common prank for young reprobates is called Doorbell Ditch or Ding Dong Ditch. The principle is to ring a neighbor's doorbell and then run and hide, causing the neighbor inconvenience and consternation at answering the door when no one is there.

The new camera doorbells have taken the fun out of Doorbell Ditch, because the perpetrator is being video recorded and streamed to the homeowner. Not so fun. These doorbell cameras are beneficial for home security if you are tech-savvy enough to connect it to your handheld device and home wifi. There are hundreds of YouTube videos to help with installing these cameras. I won't cover them here.

I do want to talk about old-fashioned doorbells. When the old doorbell breaks, most people just live with it and go back to knocking. I seldom get a call to come fix a

doorbell, but oddly enough, I frequently fix them as part of the "While you're here, could you look at this?" list.

Some homes have wireless doorbells with a battery-operated button (transmitter) and battery-operated bell (receiver). Typically, these are installed after the original, hardwired, low voltage bell stopped working. They use radio waves to connect and have trouble broadcasting through stone, brick, or metal walls. They also have limited range and won't work if the bell is too far from the button.

But if you like the old-fashioned "ding-dong" and wish to repair the hardwired bell, here is my technique. Remember that your doorbell is a low voltage device, it can create very tiny sparks or give you a slight tingle if you are grounded, (standing barefoot on wet soil), so put on your rubber sole shoes and do this fix carefully when the power is on.

Start with the button. Is it hard to push or gets stuck when it is pressed? Time for some Tri-Flow. Spray a tiny bit on the edge of the button and push it a few times. If that doesn't fix the problem, gently take the button off the wall. There are two wires screwed to the back. Take your screwdriver and touch it across the bare wires. If the bell rings, the button is faulty and should be replaced. If the bell does not ring when the wires are crossed, disconnect them from the button and twist them together, closing the circuit, to help continue with your testing.

With the wires connected, go check the bell box. Is it humming? Humming is good news! The humming tells you that the bell's transformer is working, and you have good wiring. The humming means your problem is in the bell box. Go back to the button and disconnect the wires until you finish debugging the bell box.

If you do not hear humming, you need to find the voltage transformer. The transformer is a lump of metal with small wires attached. Typically it is mounted on a cover plate over an electrical junction box on the wall of your garage, or in a closet, or in the basement if you have one. Scout around and locate it. Now, you need an electrical tester

to confirm that it is working. Remember that it is low voltage, (between 12 and 24 volts), and set your tester accordingly. If there is no voltage coming out of the transformer, carefully check inside the junction box to be sure there is power (120 volts) to the transformer. Replace or repair accordingly.

Back to that humming at the bell box. Grab your trusty can of Tri-Flow and lightly spray the little piston (ding) or pistons (ding and dong), work it up and down a little and then see if it bounces up to strike the bell plate. Push the bell button (connect the two wires by the door) and see if that worked. If the problem was with the button sticking and the bell was stuck "on" for a few hours, the coils that make the pistons ring are fried. You will need to replace the bell box. The big box stores don't carry much selection. If you want something nice, it might be better to shop online.

After checking the button, the transformer, and the bell box, your last resort is the wiring. The wire for doorbells is thin (low voltage) and might have been cut or broken accidentally. Use a continuity tester (or ohm meter) to confirm that the wires are not broken. If it is not a complete circuit, it might be easiest to run new wire than to try and trace the old wires. Or call your handyman to come do that for you.

Hopefully by now you are enjoying the dulcet tones of a working doorbell. Please excuse me as I put on my fastest sneakers and go visit my neighbor.

Jim Hurley is an independent handyman with over 25 years of experience in residential repairs.

Hopefully this free advice is helpful to someone attempting Do-It-Yourself home repairs. The information presented is intended for informational purposes and for use by persons having appropriate technical skill, at their own discretion and risk.





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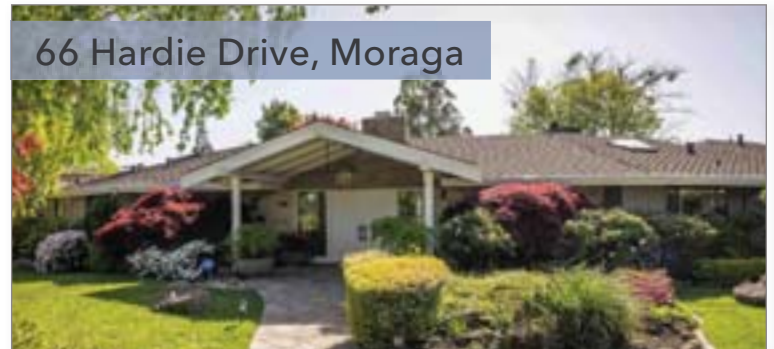
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**Listed for \$1,899,000. Sold for \$2,300,000.**  
**Represented seller.**

Beautiful traditional two-story home located on a cul-de-sac.  
Large, flat, redwood-studded lot and two primary suites.

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**Sold for \$2,700,000. Represented buyer.**

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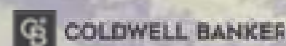
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## Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

### Spring succession



Photos Cynthia Brian

**Final call to fertilize lawns to maintain the lush green for summer.**

... continued from Page D1

Be cautious of poisonous plants invading your vegetable garden. Poison hemlock is everywhere and is deadly if ingested. The pretty plant displays lacy and fernlike leaves with very delicate white flowers. A member of the carrot family, it is often mistaken for Queen Anne's lace, a less-lethal specimen. The best way to identify poison hemlock is to look at the stems which have red or purple spots or streaks. Its most poisonous alkaloid is coniine which causes complete respiratory collapse. Only mechanical or artificial ventilation can save someone who has ingested poison hemlock. Wear gloves and a mask to dig out the root. Don't weed whack it or burn it as small particles could be inhaled. Socrates drank hemlock tea as his preferred



**The finished frame of succulents with a turkey feather adornment hangs on the house exterior.**

method of dying.

The yellow blooms of the elderberry tree signal spring's arrival, and people need to be aware of the toxicity of this beautiful tree. The stems, seeds, leaves, bark, and roots are all poisonous to humans containing a cyanide-inducing glycoside. The blue-black berries are safe to eat only after boiling for at least 20 minutes. Elderberry jam and wine are popular and include major health benefits.

Foxglove, *Digitalis purpurea*, a spectacularly beautiful biennial plant, is extremely attractive to children and every part of it is lethal to humans. Compounds from this plant are used in heart medicines. Since they grow tall, five to seven feet tall, plant them at the back of a flower garden and keep them out of your kitchen garden.



**A healthy potager planted with calendula, rose, parsley, tomatoes, peppers, marjoram, oregano, mint, borage, and garlic.**

Besides getting my potager and vegetable garden installed, my latest fun spring project has been creating a living wall garden by using a decorative frame from Nature Hills Nursery that features a built-in watering tray and a reservoir for drainage. This instant wall planter is a step up from the DIY picture frame with chicken wire-filled moss that I designed several years ago. I added potting soil to the portrait garden, arranged a variety of succulents, attached a found turkey feather, watered, and hung it on the exterior of my house in the sunshine as a growing art piece.

Every day I am immersed in gratitude for the wonders of Mother Earth as I watch the procession and succession of nature's bounty. Walk gently through your garden to enjoy the miraculous magic of May.



## Another successful Lafayette Juniors Lifestyles Tour

The 23rd annual Lifestyles Tour returned to Lafayette on April 30 with a well-attended event featuring six magnificent residences, including the famous Red Farmhouse owned by Karen and Tom Mulvaney. More than 600 tickets were sold for the event, which raised

more than \$60,000 to help fund the Lafayette Juniors beneficiaries, including Lamorinda Village and White Pony Express. Guests enjoyed viewing beautiful interiors and amazing grounds that included guest houses, pools, and a variety of landscaping treatments.



Lafayette's famous Red Farmhouse



Poolside paradise

Photos Sora O'Doherty



Lush gardens grace this home.



This outdoor kitchen adds living space to the home.



Open concept designs were highlighted in these three homes.



## The Goddess Gardener's Gardening Guide for May

**FERTILIZE:** If you haven't already, fertilize trees, shrubs, rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias, lawns, and ground covers while the days are warm, and the evenings are cool.

**FEED** indoor plants.

**BAIT** for snails and slugs that will damage new seedlings with organic Sluggo. The active ingredient is iron phosphate. Corry's Slug and Snail Killer contains 5% sodium ferric Exceda that is safe for pets and people and can be used on edibles. After eating the bait, these gastropods slink to their hiding places to die. Because both male and female mollusks lay eggs, one slug or snail can contribute to thousands of these pests terrorizing crops if not eradicated.

**SPRAY** roses, crape myrtle trees, and ground cover susceptible to aphids and fungal diseases.

**DEADHEAD** roses as the petals fade to encourage continuous blooming.

**PLANT** annuals and perennials including zinnia, salvia, calibrachoa.

**ELIMINATE** standing water from gutters, old tires, or saucers to reduce the breeding of mosquitoes.

**TRANSPLANT** small trees, including fruit trees such as nectarine or avocado to the desired area.

**MOW** tall wild grass to three inches or less as a fire defensible space.

**COMBINE** edibles and flowers in a kitchen garden with a variety of tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, beets, squash, garlic, parsley, borage, nasturtium, calendula, roses and marigolds.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.



Intoxicating scent of yellow bearded iris combined with pink carpet roses.



Roses are bedrocks of a gorgeous garden. (Arizona rose)

Photos Cynthia Brian

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### Cynthia Brian is elated about the rain!

Cynthia Brian, The Goddess Gardener, is available for hire to help you prepare for your spring garden. Raised in the vineyards of Napa County, Cynthia 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 StarStyle® Radio Broadcast at [www.StarStyleRadio.com](http://www.StarStyleRadio.com).

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# LAMORINDA'S LEADING INDEPENDENT REAL ESTATE FIRM

## ORINDA



**105 Alta Haciendas Road**  
Spectacular 5 bd/ 3 full ba + 2 half ba home on private 4.02 acre lot w/an amazingly landscaped walking path!

**\$4,995,000**

## ORINDA



New Listing

**34 Descanso Drive**  
Delightful updated 4 bed/ 2.5 bath home set on quiet cul-de-sac in Orinda's beloved Ivy Drive neighborhood!

**\$1,995,000**

## ORINDA



Pending

**294 Orchard Road**  
Rare opportunity in Orinda's popular Glorietta neighborhood to own a 3375 SF, 4 bd /3 ba on a level .46 acre lot!

**\$1,795,000**

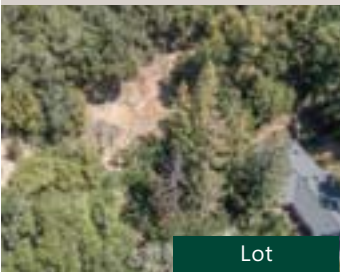
## ORINDA



**50 Meadow View**  
Beautifully remodeled 3 bed/ 2 bath single-story rancher in Orinda's beloved Glorietta neighborhood!

**\$1,595,000**

## ORINDA



Lot

**23 Kittiwake Road**  
Private residential .43 acre lot in 1 of Bay Area's most sought after neighborhoods. Close to Highway 24 & downtown.

**\$499,000**

## LAFAYETTE



**3812 E Happy Valley Rd**  
In the heart of HVR 4 bd/ 3.5 ba home built w/ thoughtful care & quality, this home exudes warmth & serenity!

**\$3,995,000**

## MORAGA



**296 Birchwood Drive**  
Exceptionally maintained one-level 4 bd/2.5 ba home Moraga's coveted Rheem Valley Manor neighborhood!

**\$1,950,000**

## MORAGA



**2135 Ascot Dr. # 22**  
Beautifully maintained 2 bd/2.5 ba 1529 sq. ft. two-story condo w/ walking distance to Rheem Shopping Center!

**\$839,000**

## WALNUT CREEK



**304 Castle Glen Rd**  
Nestled atop on a private hill 4 bd/ 2.5 ba home on 5.5+ acres w/ beautiful sweeping views from every room!

**\$2,095,000**

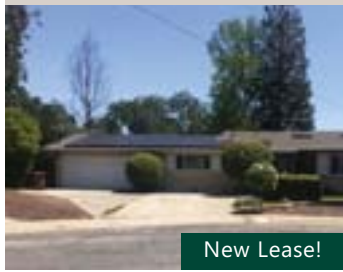
## WALNUT CREEK



**440 N Civic Dr. #313**  
Top floor 2 bed condo w/ fantastic natural light & includes access to many amenities. Resort living at The Keys!

**\$450,000**

## PLEASANT HILL



New Lease!

**10 Maureen Ct**  
Cute 3 bed/ 2 bath rancher for lease on a huge lot on a cul-de-sac in the Strandwood neighborhood!

**\$4,500/mo**

## CONCORD



New Listing

**2707 Eastgate Ave**  
Charming updated move-in ready home in the Concord Estates neighborhood w/ 4 bedrooms + office!

**\$699,000**

## The Village Associates:

Ashley Battersby  
Patricia Battersby  
Shannon Conner  
Meara Dunsmore

Linda Ehrich

Joan Evans

Linda Friedman

Claudia Gohler

Christina Linezo

Gillian Hogan

Dexter Honens II

April Matthews

Hillary Murphy

Karen Murphy

John Nash

Altie Schmitt

Judy Schoenrock

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Amy Rose Smith

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