

# LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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**The East Bay Open Studios** is back with open studios. 140 artists for you to visit and to view their art.

**FREE EVENT.** Details, including a map are at [eastbayopenstudios.com](http://eastbayopenstudios.com).

Weekend 1: June 4 & 5, 11:00 – 6:00  
Weekend 2: June 11 & 12, 11:00 – 6:00

**EBOS** east bay open studios  
Free Self-Guided Tours of ARTIST STUDIOS and EXHIBITION SPACES



Lafayette Community Garden co-founder Janet Thomas (second from right) with gardening team members Regina McGrath, Shirley Sigal, Jeanie Hill and Sue Scholtz. Photo Sharon K. Sobotta

## Sowing the seeds of hope, cooperation at Lafayette Community Garden

By Sharon K. Sobotta

When Janet Thomas and the gardening team began planning for the Lafayette Community Garden nearly a decade and a half ago, they were planting the seeds to something much larger than a growing ground. “It’s a cooperative garden. We work as teams and collaborate,” Thomas says. “We love to see anyone in the community come any time that we’re open and we’d love for this to be a resource.”

On a drizzly April morning, weeks ahead of Earth Day, multiple members of the gardening team are on site doing their tasks while working on their respective teams, alongside Thomas, who is a co-founder and a work lead at the garden. Regina McGrath, a 10-year member, who’s on the tomato and summer crop team says gardening at the Community Garden is a

team sport. “I enjoy coming here, turning off my phone and being at peace.” Eight-year member Shirley Sigal says she most loves watching nature do its magic. “Watching things grow (is the best part).” Jeanie Hill says she’s a proud contributor to the flower team. “My job is to grow flowers for the pollinators.”

Sue Scholtz is a fifth generation Californian who has farmers from the Central Valley on both sides of her family. “I think it’s in my blood to be out here watching plants grow,” Scholtz says. As a member of the Wednesday watering team, Scholtz says she enjoys being out in nature on her own with the plants, keeping an eye on the real time effects of the drought. When asked where the drought is taking us, Scholtz is optimistic. “It’s taking us to a good place today because it’s raining out here,” Scholtz says. “Today I’m hopeful.”

Thomas says that kind of teamwork serves not only the plants and the wellness of the garden but also the wellness of the community itself. “The sense of community that is fostered here is something that we all benefit from and we certainly did during COVID.”

The planning for the garden began in 2008 and the garden officially opened 11 seasons ago. Whether you’re looking to get in the dirt and plant, breathe in fresh air, hang out with chickens, see cultural artifacts or learn how environmentalism and the garden connects to issues of social justice, take or leave a food donation in the pantry in front of the garden – which is located on Mr. Diablo Boulevard across from the reservoir – there promises to be something for you at the garden.

... continued on Page A9

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- Not to be missed B4
- Obituaries B5
- How to contact us B6
- Classified B6
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## EBMUD announces Stage 2 drought mandates



Lawns like this will likely grace front yards soon.

By Vera Kochan

The East Bay Municipal Utility District announced strategies to this year’s drought emergency following its April 26 board of directors meeting. The decisions should come as no surprise to customers who have been expecting mandates to take affect once the in-

sufficient rainy season had ended. In a 6-1 vote, the board chose to elevate its drought response by issuing a mandatory 10% district-wide water reduction target. The 10% reduction had previously been voluntary with customers managing to save approximately 7% of water usage.

EBMUD’s source for most of its water supply comes from the Mokelumne River Watershed. Between January through March, only 2.5 inches of rain was accounted for, creating the driest first three months of any year in EBMUD’s nearly 100-year history.

According to a statement in March, “EBMUD, like other urban agencies, is required to maintain a Water Shortage Contingency Plan that outlines the District’s drought response. EBMUD’s plan reflects decades of investment and planning for multi-year droughts and is based on local hydrologic conditions and our customer usage patterns. When water storage levels are low, the EBMUD board asks customers to conserve and approves the purchase of supplemental supplies.”

The statement adds that, since October 2021, EBMUD had brought in supplemental water through a contract with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which accounts for almost an additional 20% of its annual

supplies. As of the end of April, EBMUD’s reservoirs are 71% full and not expected to get any better once the Sierra Nevada snow melts.

In an April 26 statement, the board of directors’ Stage 2 drought declaration includes: “Mandated 10% water use reduction District-wide as compared to 2020, and review progress towards achieving this goal in November; Reinstatement of the Excessive Use Penalty Ordinance. The ordinance sets a threshold of roughly 1,646 gallons of water per day for households. Households who exceed the threshold will receive one warning, and then will face fines of \$2 for every 748 gallons of water above the threshold; Updated water restrictions, including limiting outdoor watering to three times per week, prohibiting washing down sidewalks and driveways, and requiring restaurants and cafes to only provide water upon request, among other provisions.”

EBMUD could also consider imposing a drought surcharge of up to 8% on water use charges (not the entire bill) to cover the expense of purchasing supplemental water supplies. This decision was scheduled to come up for a vote during the May 10 board meeting, after press time. All emergency surcharges will remain in effect as long as the drought persists.

<b>Civic News</b> A1-A10	<b>Life in Lamorinda</b> B1-B6	<b>Summer Camps</b> C2-C3	<b>Sports</b> C1-C4	<b>Our Homes</b> D1-D16
Future use of Moraga's Measure K Funds - Page A5	Gold Coast Chamber Players present 'A Cultural Crossroads' - Page B1	Lamorinda Weekly's 16th annual all Camps and Classes Guide - Page C2 - C3	Miramonte boys and Campo girls win DAL Lacrosse Championships - Page C2	Plantings make May the most colorful month of the year - Page D1