

Lamorinda

OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 18 Issue 3 Wednesday, March 27, 2024



E-battery fire concerns

... read on Page OH4

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Spring into Action

By Cynthia Brian

Photos Cynthia Brian



Blue-eyed star grass is a California native

“All through the long winter, I dream of my garden. On the first warm day of Spring, I dig my fingers deep into the soft earth. I can feel its energy, and my spirits soar.”—Helen Hayes

The minute the air warmed, I headed to the garden. Spring is finally here and without a doubt, it is my favorite season. This year it is especially meaningful because, this, my first spring article, is the 500th column that I've written for the Lamorinda Weekly. Yes, you read that correctly. Since 2008, although not all of them were about gardening, 500 original articles penned by me have been published in this paper. Thank you all for publishing, reading, and commenting.

People often ask me where I get my ideas for new columns. The simple answer is—in nature. When I am out in the garden I am totally focused on the tasks at hand. I listen to the bird songs, the rustling wind, the mooing cows, the fluttering leaves, and the croaking frogs. No earbuds, music, or podcasts while I'm working because the sound of the outdoors helps me be present to ponder.

Before I go out, I slather on the sunscreen and fill my water canis-



Plant a container with freesia, cyclamen, stonecrop, and a small palm.

ter so that I stay hydrated while weeding, seeding, and feeding. When it is cold, I'll wear long pants and a sweatshirt, but when it gets hot, I prefer a tank top and shorts.

This is what my garden gear consists of:

- * Two pairs of gloves: a pair of surgical gloves underneath my garden gloves
- * An Insect Shield® permethrin-infused kerchief wrapped around my neck to keep the ticks away.
- * A scarf on my head with a ballcap covering it.
- * My garden apron with pockets for my pruning shears, sunglasses, and seeds.
- * Rubber boots with two pairs of socks.

In past years, before I donned the Insect Shield® permethrin-infused kerchief, ticks would attack my neck. Three times ticks had to be surgically removed because they were too close to vital organs. This past week, on day three of the warm weather, I worked in a tank top. Alas, a tick tagged me on the shoulder. I only noticed it after my shower.

... continued on Page OH8

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Lamorinda home sales recorded

| City | Last reported | Lowest amount | Highest amount |
|-----------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| LAFAYETTE | 12 | \$1,130,000 | \$6,500,000 |
| MORAGA | 4 | \$1,728,000 | \$2,300,000 |
| ORINDA | 6 | \$1,300,000 | \$2,305,000 |

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

- 15 Billington Court, \$2,250,000, 3 Bdrms, 3243 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 02-12-24
386 Castello Road, \$2,480,000, 4 Bdrms, 2128 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 02-12-24,
Previous Sale: \$770,000, 04-24-13
1000 Dewing Avenue #203, \$1,350,000, 2 Bdrms, 1554 SqFt,
2017 YrBlt, 02-20-24
1089 Glen Road, \$3,850,000, 4 Bdrms, 3408 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 02-14-24,
Previous Sale: \$2,495,000, 08-19-15
3212 Los Palos Circle, \$3,495,000, 4 Bdrms, 3757 SqFt, 2017 YrBlt, 02-20-24,
Previous Sale: \$2,599,000, 06-12-18
3221 Lucas Circle, \$3,201,500, 4 Bdrms, 3117 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 02-23-24,
Previous Sale: \$2,300,000, 04-21-20
1212 Monticello Road, \$6,500,000, 4 Bdrms, 4785 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 02-14-24,
Previous Sale: \$2,325,000, 06-23-07
3489 Moraga Boulevard, \$1,685,000, 2 Bdrms, 1384 SqFt,
1939 YrBlt, 02-12-24
3976 South Peardale Drive, \$3,200,000, 5 Bdrms, 2128 SqFt,
1941 YrBlt, 02-15-24, Previous Sale: \$2,625,000, 01-21-21
2548 Pebble Beach Loop, \$1,130,000, 2 Bdrms, 1871 SqFt,
1979 YrBlt, 02-14-24, Previous Sale: \$1,075,000, 05-26-21
1516 Pleasant Hill Road, \$2,275,000, 5 Bdrms, 3940 SqFt,
2019 YrBlt, 02-16-24
1115 Silverhill Court, \$1,950,000, 3 Bdrms, 3022 SqFt, 1988 YrBlt, 02-14-24,
Previous Sale: \$900,000, 12-03-14

MORAGA

- 772 Augusta Drive, \$1,765,000, 3 Bdrms, 1908 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 02-23-24,
Previous Sale: \$1,400,000, 05-19-22
1093 Country Club Drive, \$2,300,000, 4 Bdrms, 2456 SqFt,
1974 YrBlt, 02-22-24
181 Draeger Drive, \$1,736,500, 4 Bdrms, 2675 SqFt, 1977 YrBlt, 02-23-24
414 Fernwood Drive, \$1,728,000, 4 Bdrms, 2217 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 02-21-24

ORINDA

- 71 Barbara Road, \$1,300,000, 3 Bdrms, 1564 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 02-12-24,
Previous Sale: \$1,000,000, 11-16-22
3 Beaconsfield Court, \$2,140,000, 4 Bdrms, 2100 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 02-15-24,
Previous Sale: \$1,225,000, 07-29-15
16 Candlestick Road, \$1,695,000, 4 Bdrms, 2499 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 02-22-24,
Previous Sale: \$300,000, 10-01-86
12 Eastwood Drive, \$2,305,000, 3 Bdrms, 2620 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 02-13-24
4 Oakview Terrace, \$2,250,000, 4 Bdrms, 3553 SqFt, 1998 YrBlt, 02-22-24,
Previous Sale: \$2,100,000, 04-18-22
340 Tahos Road, \$1,925,000, 3 Bdrms, 2680 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 02-15-24,
Previous Sale: \$240,000, 02-12-98

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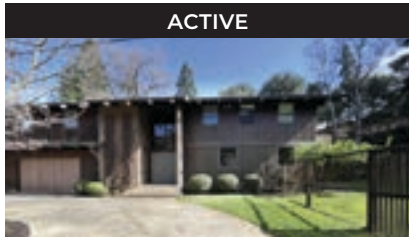


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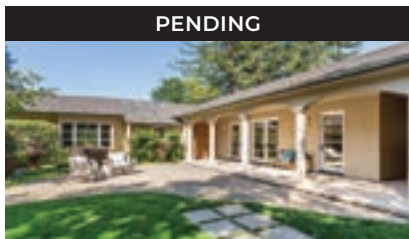


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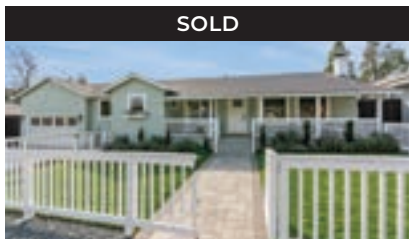
ACTIVE

1258 N. SCENIC DRIVE, LAFAYETTE
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PENDING

32 CREST ROAD, LAFAYETTE
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SOLD

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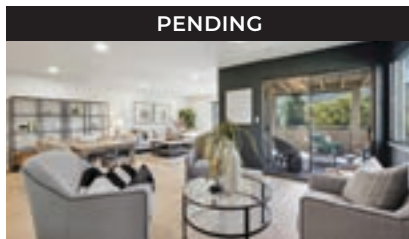
SOLD • REPRESENTED BUYER

341 CAMINO SOBRANTE, ORINDA
SOLD FOR \$2,675,000
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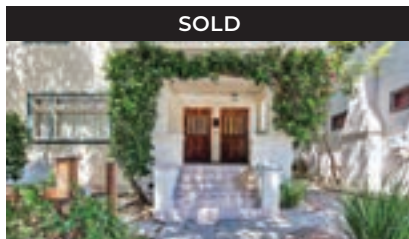
JUST LISTED

17 TAMARISK, MORAGA COUNTRY CLUB
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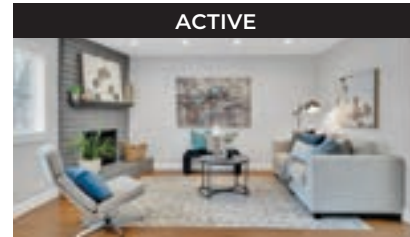
SOLD

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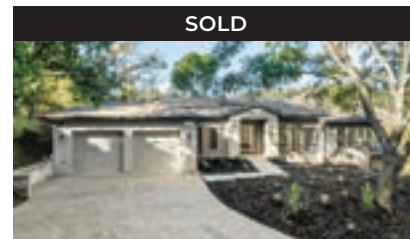
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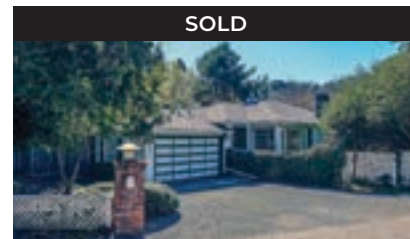
ACTIVE

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SOLD

3631 BICKERSTAFF ROAD, LAFAYETTE
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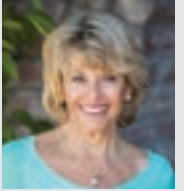
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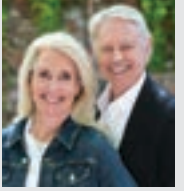
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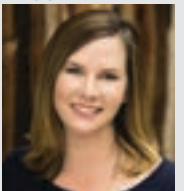
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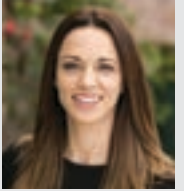
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Care and caution with e-vehicles, batteries offered in CERT talk

By David Scholz

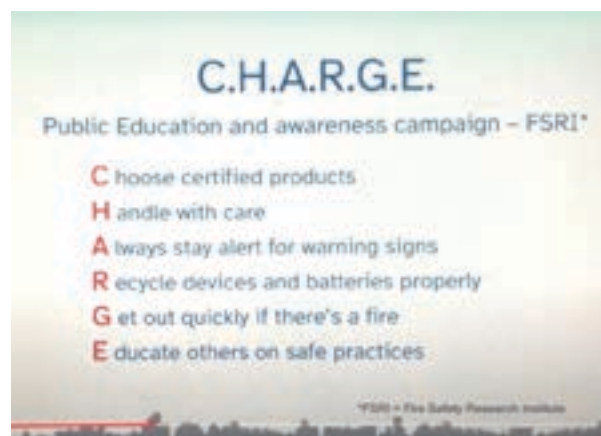


Image provided

Even as e-vehicles (EVs) and other e-mobility devices continue ruling the day for consumers for the convenience they provide, first responders are extolling a cautious position and safety first approach when it's time to park and charge them at the end of the day.

Those insights about EVs, e-bikes, hoverboards, and e-scooters were voiced at the latest gathering of Lamorinda CERT in an online Zoom meeting held on March 11 with guest Capt. Dan Dick, from the Moraga Orinda Fire District, who also is a CERT instructor for utilities, hazard materials, and fire safety module.

"This is (a) \$40-billion-dollar industry that is only growing, and we gotta start understanding how these things can us hurt and how we can protect ourselves," he said.

Dick cited a central question related to e-batteries – how are we going to get that induction motor in the vehicle the power it needs to function?

As part of the presentation, a brief e-battery tutorial was given to explain their chemistry in order to spotlight what is transpiring as batteries are charged and the impact of temperature variants.

"Batteries are like Goldilocks – they don't like too hot or too cold. They like it just right' and when it gets out of those parameters on the hot side that is when bad things can happen," Dick said.

When considering the greater amount of

charge that battery has, "that can create the problem for us as first responders and you as the user of these devices," Dick continued.

Three specific problems areas – mechanical, thermal, and electrical abuse – were noted with the e-batteries.

Mechanical involves physically damaging the unit, such as during a vehicle accident, which in turn interferes with normal operation. Thermal is heat-related, and when heat builds due to the lack of air conditioning or airflow reaching the cells, this can lead to problems like off-gassing. Electrical abuse happens while overcharging, undercharging, or shorts from the inverter. Often, damage can be reversed if caught quickly.

As part of the Zoom presentation, videos were shown to illustrate the potential problems.

In one video, a controlled experiment with an e-scooter showed what can result when electrical abuse occurs with batteries. This film further illustrated the lack of time there is to react and survive in such cases.

A second video shown was an incident from 2018, demonstrating how quickly things happen when off gassing occurs in an uncontrolled environment. An adult went to investigate after a family pet noticed something was amiss; soon after, the camera in the room captured the growing plume of smoke and the fire that ensued, all within 15 seconds.

"That is why I have tried to start educating myself about the dangers of these batteries and mobility devices," said Dick. "When things happen to these batteries, bad things happen."

During the follow up Q&A session with attendees of the presentation, queries were made, including one seeking advice for charging e-vehicles.

"Anything that uses a battery to power the induction motor to make that car go is prone to accidents," said Dick of the universal concerns surrounding e-vehicles, whether they are a Tesla model, Nissan Leaf, Chevy Volt, or whatever the car maker.

He noted different car makers are using bigger cells that generate more heat compared to Tesla.

"Different car manufacturers have different ways to deal with potential problems," Dick

continued.

For where one should recharge a vehicle, "I would charge outside," he said.

Regarding the range for keeping the battery charged, it is recommended for every day driving to keep it between 50 to 80% for longer state of charge (SOC), which also means fewer charging cycles are needed. Frequent overcharging heats up the battery. As for running it down, it should not go below 20%, at which point one should start thinking about charging again.

"If you smell something and you are driving and hear some crackling or popping, or see off gassing, don't drive into your garage," said Dick. "Leave (the vehicle) outside. That is (a) sign of imminent problems."

E-battery disposal options

A few local options accept the batteries used for different e-mobility devices, excluding e-batteries for powering electric cars.

REI – Concord, in the Willow Shopping Center, 1975 Diamond Blvd., accepts batteries for e-bikes, as well as those for skateboards, scooters, and hoverboards.

Those merchants accepting only electric batteries used to power bicycles include: two in Walnut Creek, Encina Bicycle Center, 2901 Ygnacio Valley Rd., and Mike's Bikes – Walnut Creek, 1615 North California Blvd.; First Mile Cycle Works, 3566 Mt. Diablo Blvd, in Lafayette.; and at two Alamo locations, The Trek, 80 C Alamo Plaza, and California Bike and Snowboard, 1483 Danville Blvd.

Another option for proper disposal is Hayward-based Clean Earth. It accepts various smaller wattage batteries that power mobility devices for a fee on the second Friday of each month at 30677 Huntwood Ave., off Industrial Parkway. Visit the company's website www.cleaneartinc.com for more details and price information.

Call these specific businesses for more information and to confirm they are currently accepting e-batteries, or contact the manufacturer of the battery for proper disposal options.

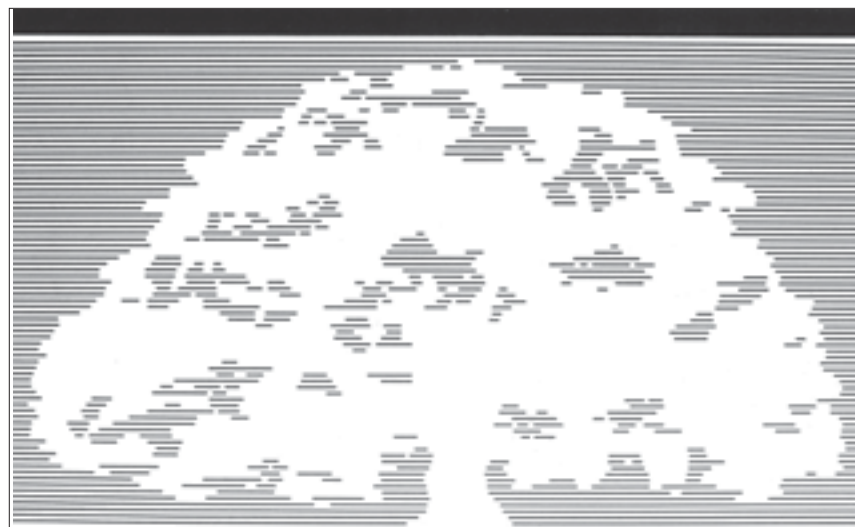
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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian **Spring into Action**

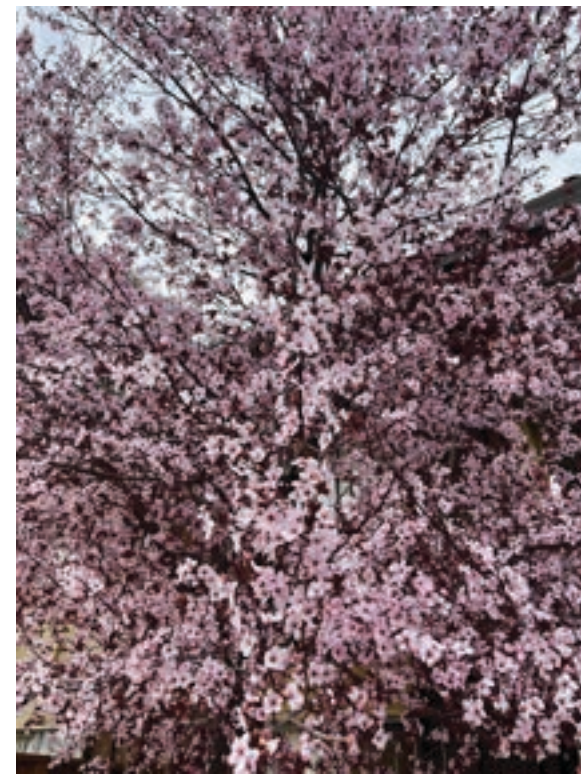
Photos Cynthia Brian



Edible flowers of arugula.



This fluorescent pink azalea blooms in a pot.



The delicate flowers of a flowering plum tree.

... continued from Page OH1

Beware:

A word of caution for the year—ticks are everywhere. They hide in grass, trees, bushes, and weeds. They are bloodsuckers and will attach themselves to you and your pets. They also can migrate from you to someone else or to/from your pet. After being in the garden, make sure to wash your clothes, and your body, and check for ticks. If you find one, do not twist or squeeze. Use a sharp, clean tweezer to lift the tick, and don't touch it with your hands. Wash the area thoroughly with soap and water and apply alcohol. Ticks carry bacteria and can cause Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and other diseases. If you can't remove the tick, call your physician as soon as possible. Contact your doctor if you experience an allergic reaction. The longer the tick is in your body, the higher your

chances of an infection. If possible, snap a photo of the tick and put it in a jar or Ziplock bag to show the health care professional. According to the California Department of Public Health, "An infected western black-legged tick must be attached to a person and feed for at least 24 hours before it can transmit the bacteria that cause Lyme disease." Find more information at cdph.ca.gov.

The tick I pulled from my shoulder was small and I couldn't save it or photograph it. Yet, my shoulder is still swollen and sore from the toxins. I will now follow recommendations to apply 20% DEET before going into the fields. I will also wear Insect Shield® permethrin-infused long sleeves, despite the heat.

Spring Action:

We have much work to do now that spring has sprung. It is time to get our hands in the dirt. In one week, we experienced torrential

rain, followed by hurricane-force winds, and then the sweet sunshine of perfect days. The wild weather reminded me of a quote from Mark Twain: "In the Spring, I have counted 136 different kinds of weather inside of 24 hours."

Weeds sprouted like beanstalks while flowers, shrubs, and trees burst from bud to bloom. It's going to be a long and arduous task for me to weed my hillside as the flowers and weeds are intermingled, which means that each weed must be plucked by the root by hand. No weed whackers allowed else all the flowers and perennials would be destroyed. What's on your to-do list?

Check irrigation systems and test sprinklers. If you have a lawn, the sprinkler heads may be buried underneath a mat of new grass.

... continued on next Page



Blue Dutch iris.

... continued from Page OH8

Re-seed lawns to fill in gaps or to make them lusher. Fertilize with an organic spring formula to feed the soil. I always check the weather so that I go out in the rain to accomplish these tasks. By re-seeding and feeding while it is raining, the seeds and nutrients will penetrate.

Weed carefully and steadily. The days are longer, so it is easier to get a few chores done after work. It's important to remove weeds before they go to seed and spread. Each day I make sure to fill at least a five-gallon bucket. For weeds that have roots that will multiply and spread when even a tiny piece is left in the soil, I mix a gallon of 30% vinegar with a cup of table salt, and 1/2 a cup of dawn detergent and spray it where needed. Be cautious as this mixture will kill anything it touches. It is especially effective for poison oak and bindweed. Weeds may go in the compost pile if they are not poisonous or have seed-heads. Euphorbia, oleander, hemlock, poison oak, ivy, bindweed, bull thistle, and any other noxious or toxic plants are best bagged and disposed of in the trash. According to the Weed Science Society of America, a "noxious" weed is "any plant designated by federal, state, or local government officials as injurious to public health, agriculture, recreation, wildlife, or property."

Bait for snails and slugs. These pests target sprouts and new



Get a head start with seedlings in a greenhouse.

growth. When you see a mucus track or holes in your cabbage leaves, you have an infestation. There are many methods to eradicate them. Spread Sluggo which is considered safe around children, pets, and edible plants because its main ingredient is iron phosphate. You can go out at night with a flashlight and pick them up one by one. Copper barriers also deflect the activities of these gastropods. Sprinkle diatomaceous earth around your garden as these mollusks prefer not to crawl through it. Cheap beer in cups is a remedy I've used repeatedly. They aren't getting drunk, they are attracted to the yeast, and they drown. Raccoons, opossums, mice, and birds feast on these grimy slimy pests. Since slugs and snails multiply rapidly, control the infestation.

Amend your soil with compost and mulch as a solid foundation before you plant.

Add new gravel to garden paths and reinforce wood, brick, or stone edging.

Enjoy the exploding colors as spring unfurls.

There are many more actions to be taken in our spring gardens. In my 501st article, I'll continue with recommendations. In the meantime, dig your fingers into the dirt and let your spirits soar!

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing! Happy Spring!

Designing Closet Systems: What You Need to Know

By Jennifer Raftis, CPO(r)



Shutterstock

Installing a closet system can revolutionize your storage space, bringing order and efficiency to your home. Beyond just tidying up clutter, a well-designed closet system maximizes every inch of available space, making it easier to find what you need and streamlining your daily routine.

If you are considering installing or upgrading a closet system, here are some thoughts to consider. I have been designing closet systems as part of my work as a professional organizer for close to 10 years and I've learned a few things!

Before I tell you about the different closet systems, I want to share a couple of insider tips. There are 2 very important spaces that I recommend for everyone's closet and I rarely see them (because...who knew!). The first one is a small designated space for the "clirty" clothes (clean + dirty - the clothes you can wear again before washing). I usually find this category piled up on a chair in the bedroom or heaped in the closet. A more efficient approach is to create a small hanging or stacking space in your closet to neatly keep these items together.

The second space is a place for donations - a small box or bag. Trust me, there are always clothes, shoes, purses, scarves, etc. that we no longer wear but for some reason, they stay in the closet. Having a donation bin in the closet makes it effortless to get rid of these items.

Here are the 3 different closet systems I like to use when creating custom designs:

Custom designed - built and installed by contractors

Custom designed - installed by closet companies

Custom designed - using Elfa closet systems and installed by the Container Store

Custom Designed - Built and Installed by Contractor

These closets are the most customizable as the contractor typically has the skills and experience to construct a high-quality space that is functional and beautiful. They can use every inch of the space,

even if the walls are slanted.

You are able to choose the type of material, color of material, and all the hardware. You can add lighting, soffits, and lockable drawers. Of course, this is often the most expensive option, but it is the most customizable.

Custom Designed - Installed by Closet Companies

When I am designing these closets, my clients are able to choose a wide variety of materials, colors, and hardware. The difference is that you are limited to the materials that the closet company offers (in some cases you can pick out your own pulls and knobs). They are customizable to a point. Often, the company has various widths, lengths, and depths to choose from which is great if your closet fits the exact size. These closets are built-in and can offer many terrific add-ons such as lighting, valet rods, belt racks, jewelry drawer inserts, soffits, lockable drawers, and even an island of drawers in the middle. These closets are expensive but are beautiful, functional, and add value to your home if you were to sell it someday.

Elfa Closet Systems - The Container Store

These Elfa systems are the most ingenious, customizable and budget friendly products that I have worked with. I have designed thousands of spaces using the Elfa system including pantries, laundry rooms, offices, playrooms, mud rooms, garages, walk-in, and reach-in closets. They have 3 different types of systems, all of which can be installed with ease. They are so simple to install, some of my clients have done it themselves (with the help of a video). All of the Elfa types have many components to mix and match including mesh drawers, valet rods, belt and tie racks, gliding pant shelves, and gliding shoe shelves (flat and heel shoes). These systems are really amazing for young kids as the hanging bars, shelves, and drawers can be easily moved higher as your child grows.

Elfa Classic - This system is the lowest in cost and can be cut to fit your exact space. They come in 3 colors (white, platinum, and graphite) and the material is a steel wire which provides strength and durability. They are coated with a protective finish to enhance resistance to rust and corrosion and provide a clean and attractive appearance. I have used this system in all areas of a home, warehouse, and office. I love the versatility of moving the shelves to fit the exact product. The garage components even have a utility board to organize tools and hardware, and now Elfa has a dedicated garage system with closed doors.

Elfa Decor Fascia or Decor - This system has all of the same versatile components and is offered in several colors: white, birch, walnut, or gray. The Fascia version is a piece of trim that goes in front of the ventilated shelf and the Decor is a solid shelf. The price point is higher on the Decor and Fascia and cannot be cut to fit. This is a great solution for a fraction of the cost of built-in closets and will add value to your home.

When designing your new closet, be sure to understand your unique needs such as accommodating the amount of clothing, shoes, and accessories you have as well as how many feet you need for short and long hanging space (yes, measure everything).
Happy Spring!



A yellow and blue odyssey of boxwood, oxalis, and periwinkle.

Photo Cynthia Brian



Cynthia Brian of StarStyle® Empowerment.

For more gardening advice for all seasons, check out Growing with the Goddess Gardener at <https://www.CynthiaBrian.com/books>. Raised in the vineyards of Napa County, Cynthia Brian 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 which was just honored as the 2024 Nonprofit of the Year by the Moraga Chamber of Commerce. Tune into Cynthia's StarStyle® Radio Broadcast at www.StarStyleRadio.com. Her newest children's picture book, Family Forever, from the series, Stella Bella's Barnyard Adventures is available now at <https://www.CynthiaBrian.com/online-store>. Hire Cynthia for writing projects, garden consults, and inspirational lectures. Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com <https://www.CynthiaBrian.com>

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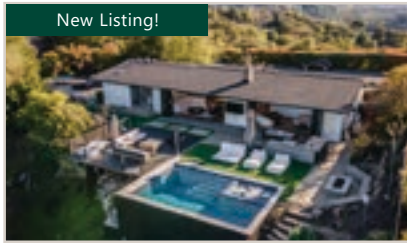
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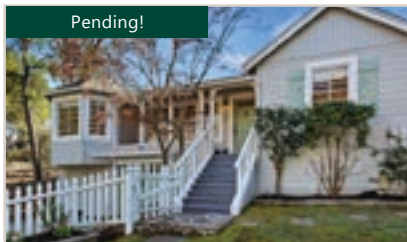


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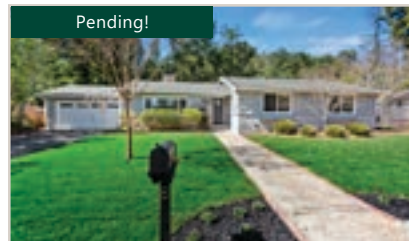
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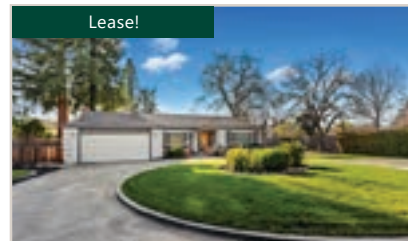


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