

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 18 Issue 4 Wednesday, April 10, 2024



The Real Estate Quarter in Review

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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

April Powers

By Cynthia Brian



Native trillium starts off white and turns magenta.

"April hath put a spirit of youth in everything." William Shakespeare

Gardeners refer to April showers bringing May flowers, and that is a truism. As an avid gardener, I believe in April powers as gardens burst into life, with abundant floral reveals marking the beginning of a vibrant growing season.

In late 2023, the United States Department of Agriculture updated hardiness zones based on weather conditions between 1991-2020. The upward trend in warming temperatures is no surprise, yet our area has remained at zone 9b. The zones are a recommendation for hardiness when planning your planting. To find specimens that will thrive in our gardens, I advise buying local at your preferred nursery, as you'll find natives and plants that are acclimated to our climate. Also, local nurseries employ knowledgeable garden gurus who can answer your questions to help you be more successful. Wherever you are making your purchase, keep in mind that our 9b hardiness zone is only one factor

when you are searching for the best plants for your yard. Your garden may experience a micro-climate different from your neighbors. Always familiarize yourself with the light, soil, and water requirements of your garden.

Intentional use of native plants that have formed symbiotic relationships with native wildlife over millions of years creates the most productive and sustainable wildlife habitat according to the National Wildlife Federation. Entomologist, Dr. Douglas Tallamy, and his team have identified what we call keystone plants, the 14% of native plants that support 90% of butterfly and moth species. Our ecosystems suffer without these keystones. You can search by zip code for necessary natives at www.NWF.org. Our live oak trees alone can host 275 species of caterpillars! Consider scattering seeds of sunflower, aster, fleabane, and lupin. Plant strawberries, trillium, goldenrod, dogwood, roses, and berries, as well as fruit trees including apricot, cherry, peach, and plum as hosts to moth and butterfly caterpillars, and pollen for bees. When broadcasting seeds either by hand or hydroseeding, don't cover the seeds or rake them. Do a light compression either with pieces of cardboard, a lawn roller, or even your feet. Yes, the birds and squirrels will consume some of your seeds. Sharing is caring.

... continued on Page OH6



Hyacinthoides, English bluebells or wood hyacinths.



Forget-me nots

Photos Cynthia Brian



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The Real Estate Quarter in Review

By **Conrad Bassett**, CRP, GMS-T; Licensed Real Estate Broker

The first quarter of 2024 began with a slightly increased pace in activity on the residential side of Lamorinda real estate versus last year. Demand remains high but the supply has continued to be low. The closings that occurred, for the most part, came from properties that went under contract in late November to late February.

The average sales price has increased over a year ago in Lafayette and Orinda, and in Moraga there was a minimal drop. The days on market remained short and the homes that had multiple offers were plentiful.

Per Contra Costa Association of Realtors statistics reported from Jan. 1 through March 31, 2024, 51 single family homes closed in Lafayette. A year ago there were 35 and in 2022 there were 66. Sales prices ranged from \$981,000 to \$6,500,000 and the average number of days on market was 19. The average sales price was \$2,280,036. A year ago it was \$2,059,520.

In Moraga, the number of single-family closings was 17. A year ago it was 13 in the first quarter, and well below the 26 in 2022. Prices so far this year have ranged from \$1,200,001 to \$2,800,000. The average sale price was \$1,943,694, a slight drop from the first quarter of 2023 when it was \$1,964,615, and a drop from the record first quarter in 2022 of \$2,350,260. The average marketing time was nine days the lowest it has been in many years.

In Orinda, the number of single-family closings was 33; in 2023 it was 28. Sales prices ranged from \$1,075,000 to \$4,970,000 with an average price of \$2,272,000. A year ago it was \$1,919,205. In the first quarter of 2022 it was \$2,268,258. It took an average of 22 days on the market to sell a home versus 40 days on the market to sell a home in Orinda in the first 90 days of 2023.

In the first quarter of 2023, Lafayette homes sold at an average of \$830.62 - an increase from the \$812.92 per square foot last year. Moraga came in at \$816.58, a slight drop from the 840.12 a year ago. Orinda was at \$829.38; one year ago it was \$773.00.

Again, as the number of closings in the first quarter usually contain a much smaller sample size, these numbers are different and can be affected by just one or two closings at the high end or the low end.

In the condominium/town home category, Lafayette had three resale

closings reported to the MLS (what does this stand for?). They ranged from \$925,000 to \$1,350,000. Moraga again had eight, ranging from \$448,444 to \$1,660,000. Orinda had four from \$445,000 and \$1,460,000. One of the four was a BMR (Below Market Rate) sale for \$609,000 on Hazel Tree Ridge.** BMR sales are limited on the prices where they can transfer so they can also affect the average sales prices. **

As of April 3, 2024, there were only 57 homes under contract per the MLS in the three combined communities (a year ago it was 38, in 2022 it was 94, and in 2021 it was well over 100.) The asking prices are between \$899,000 to \$4,895,000. This again points to the lack of supply of homes that have hit the market since the middle of February.

Inventory is at 66, comparable to the 64 a year ago and 60 at this same point in 2022.

There are 34 Lafayette properties currently on the market versus 30 properties on the market in April, 2023. Asking prices in Lafayette currently range from \$999,000 to \$9,495,000. In Moraga, buyers have their choice of 13 homes, the same as the 13 homes at this time in 2023. The price range is \$425,000 to \$2,695,000.

In Orinda there are 19 homes on the market. One year ago there were 21. The list prices range from \$1,550,000 to \$12,900,000.

There are no distressed (bank-owned or short sale) properties available in Lamorinda.

As is the case nearly every quarter, the most active price range is in the more affordable ranges. At the high end, 18 homes sold above \$3,000,000 in the three communities combined. The affordability factor is subject to a lot of interpretation. There are 13 currently available above this amount in Lamorinda.

Interest rates have stayed above historical lows, which have pushed some buyers either out of the market, to lower priced homes, or out of Lamorinda. Relocation from the corporate side has continued to increase as companies now want their employees to work out of their destination offices versus working remotely from their old locations.

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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

April Powers



Western redbud is a beautiful native tree.



Purple potato vine.

Photos Cynthia Brian



Silver succulent in a container requires minimal moisture.

... continued from Page OH1

These seeds require light and air to germinate properly. Seeds that are buried too deeply struggle to access necessary nutrients and may die.

Nature awes me as I walk around my garden. Wildflowers are in glorious abundance. So much is in flower that I don't know where to point the camera. Western redbud, sour, choke, and sweet cherries, prune, horse chestnut, tulip magnolia, mock orange, and crabapple are just a few of my trees that showcase stand-out blossoms, many intoxicatingly fragrant, and all of them populated with pollinators. My camellia has been repeatedly blooming since December. It was planted as a one-gallon plant several years ago and is now 17 feet tall and 12 feet wide. When planting anything, make sure you understand how large the plant will be at maturity so that you dig the hole in an area where it will grow and thrive.

My roses, which I heavily pruned in February, are also blooming. Not to be overlooked, forget-me-nots blanket shaded areas, while woodland hyacinths, also known as English bluebells, and sea foam statice have naturalized in sunny locations dressed to impress the garden in shades of blue and purple. Supporting the butterfly and bird population, the white clusters of viburnum flowers provide nectar for the flitting butterflies, while the forming black berries feed the birds. California poppies, calendula, tulips, daffodils, potato vine, anemones, Dutch iris, bearded iris, Calla lilies, periwinkle, a variety of succulents,

and masses of weeds carpet my meadow hillside and orchard. I'll be busy for months to come!

The wisteria is budding, and, by the time I write my next article, I imagine a glorious gauze of lavender pea flowers cascading over the pergola. When growing wisteria, it is essential to consider the sturdiness of the structure where your vine will twine. Wisteria forms a thick trunk with stems that become woody as they seek climbing support. Arbors, fences, trellises, and even trees become their ladder. To maintain its shape and size, as well as to encourage flowering, wisteria needs regular pruning.

One of my favorite edible wild species that powers on in April is allium triquetrum, wild ramps, also known as the three-cornered leek. Foragers are fond of this delicious triangular onion stem, yet it can be invasive. If you cultivate it, make sure it doesn't escape. These wild onions closely resemble the lance-shaped leaves of Lily of the Valley, which is not an allium and non-edible. Lily of the Valley is poisonous with white, bell-shaped flowers, whereas the ramps produce umbels of small white flowers. All alliums have a very distinct onion smell. If you think you are gathering ramps but there is no onion smell, do not taste it. Always be certain of what plant you are eating, as there are many plants poisonous and toxic to humans that resemble edible ones.

Although it's early, I'm experimenting with growing tomato seedlings. I started with a couple of plants in March and will continue adding to my plot through June to determine when the best

time is to grow this favorite fruit. As you plant your tomatoes, peas, and beans, support them with strong cages or wire. Tomatoes need six to eight hours of sunlight daily and are best spaced two feet apart. They will do well in large containers or pots of 15 gallons or more.

Our mild weather, warm sunshine, occasional showers, diverse plant species, wildflower displays, and lavish blooms, plus the humming, buzzing, singing, crowing, croaking, cawing, and hooting of wildlife make this gorgeous month a time of vitality, color, and renewal as youthful April powers!

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing! Happy April!



Close-up of viburnum bloom, a pollinator magnet.

The Real Estate Quarter in Review

... continued from Page OH3

Lamorinda continues to be attractive with, BART access and highly rated schools. The real estate markets in Oakland, Berkeley, and Piedmont have continued to be active, so there has been some spillover effect where buyers are willing to make longer commutes in order to find more affordable housing. Of course, Lamorinda and affordable housing is also subject to interpretation.

We also continue to see a lot of buyers in Lamorinda being represented by agents based in San Francisco and the Peninsula. Prices in those areas have been higher for many years, so many have sold to buy more house for less money in Lamorinda.

Lastly, it is important to look at what homes are selling for versus their list prices. On occasion, homes come on the market at unrealistic prices and they do not sell. We also are seeing more homes listed well below true values in the hope it will encourage bidding wars that ultimately generate a higher overall sales price. In the first quarter of this year many homes have

had multiple offers and have sold at or above the list price.

Of the 51 single-family home sales that closed in Lafayette in the first quarter of 2024, 32 sold at or above the list price. In Moraga, 14 of the 17 sales sold at or above the asking price, and in Orinda, 23 of the 33 sold at or above the final listing price.

This will typically happen when a house goes pending in the first two weeks on the market. Of the 57 currently pending sales in the three Lamorinda communities combined, 40 went pending in 14 days or less. The actual av-

erage days on the market would be markedly lower, but many agents are setting up marketing plans where they market the home to the public and to brokers and follow with an offer date in a week or so after exposing the property to the market pointing to a high likelihood of a continued trend in homes selling above the asking price.

In the detached home category in the first quarter of 2024, the average sale price in Lafayette was 102.7% of the final asking price. In Moraga it was 102% and in Orinda it was 103% .

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Cynthia Brian sits among the flowers and the weeds.

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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4 Bd | 2 Ba | 2007 Sqft | \$2,250,000

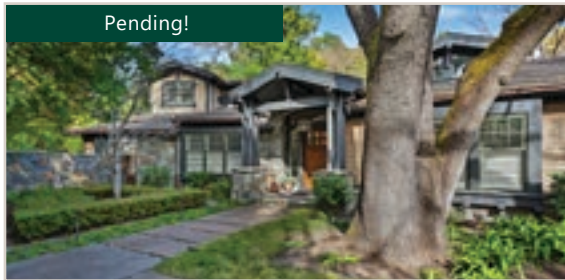
Custom home by Dan Bartlett of DB Design Build features, soaring ceilings, wall of multi-sliders & scenic views!



91 La Cuesta Road, Orinda

3 Bd | 3 Ba | 2401 Sqft | \$1,650,000

Mid-century 2400+ sf contemporary--soaring ceilings, glorious view, fabulous out-door setting--expansive patio, deck & gardens!



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789 Los Palos Manor, Lafayette

4 Bd | 4.5 Ba | 4051 Sqft | \$3,995,000

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2 Bd + Office | 2 Ba | 2148 Sqft | \$1,995,000

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New Listing!

8 Mountain View Place, Lafayette

3 Bd | 2 Ba | 2061 Sqft | \$1,495,000

This single-level home features 3 bd/ 2 ba & 2061 sqft on a .5 acre lot, all walking distance to downtown Lafayette!

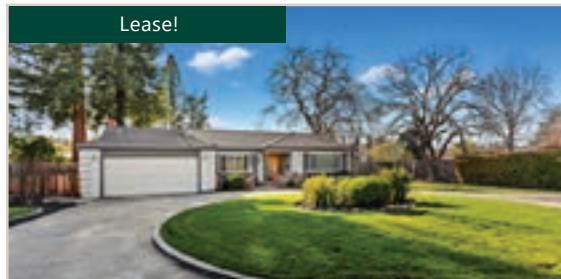


New Listing!

160 Greenwood Circle, Walnut Creek

3 Bd | 2 Ba | 1472 Sqft | \$1,295,000

Charming single-level rancher features 3 bd/ 2 ba, two separate living rooms & spacious backyard w/ level lawn!



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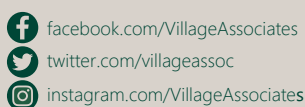
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