

# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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*Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian ...read on page D12*

## Curb Appeal

*The path of least resistance*

By Cathy Dausman



*This round garden gate window echoes a Sleepy Hollow house front theme.*

*Photo Cathy Dausman*

Beauty, it is said, is in the eye of the beholder – and a good first impression is priceless. But when it comes to a home's curb appeal, a little fresh paint, new plantings and a bit of bark dust can often work magic. Homeowners may take on a front-yard revision to freshen up an outdated look, to reduce water consumption, to

list the home for sale or a combination of these. Some prefer to the do-it-yourself method; others enlist a landscaper.

Tom Reuter of Reuter Landscaping Contractors suggests reimagining a front yard design “after 10 to 15 years.” Reuter has worked with clients in the Lamorinda area for decades; he formed his

company after first working at a local nursery. He recommends homeowners spend at least one week annually going through their yards to clean, trim and re-plant, ensuring that there is a reason for every flower and shrub.

Even though juniper is drought and deer resistant, Reuter has moved away from planting it. Tam Juniper, a popular choice 30 or 40 years ago, can become “a rat’s nest” when it overtakes a yard, he says, while a line of Italian Cypress grows “obnoxious” over time. Michael Saputo knows just how juniper gets out of hand. His Orinda neighbors once nicknamed his place “the juniper house” because his aunt and uncle, who bought the house in 1953, blanketed their entire giant front yard with it.

“It was just awful,” he says. Saputo had it removed by a landscaper about six years ago, replacing it with a unique, drought-friendly design, with a flagstone entry, lighting and drip irrigation to carefully ration water. The irrigation system is being reworked with Mondo grass installed. “It’s a look that [water supplier EBMUD] likes,” Saputo says with pride. Although his plants are not in their prime during winter months he thinks his front yard is “the best landscaped yard in Sleepy Hollow.”

Realtors will tell you that landscaping is an integral part of the home-for-sale formula. “It usually looks best when it looks established and natural,” says Tom Stack of Orinda’s Coldwell Banker office. “Does the paint merge with the landscaping? Does the home sit well on its lot?” he asks.

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