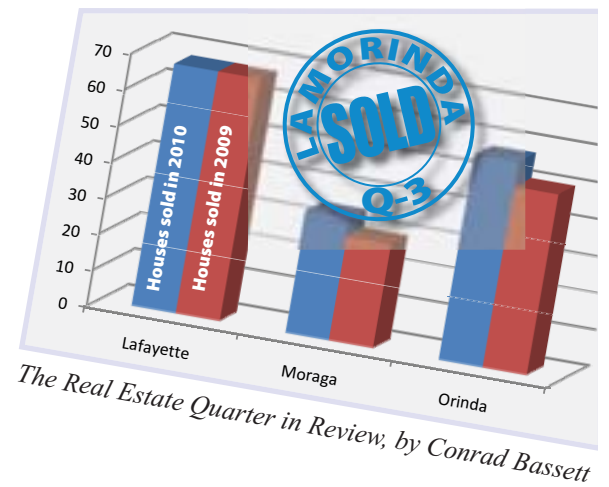


Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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Back Yard Bocce

By Lou Fancher



Alissa and Bill Scanlin play Bocce on their home court; their vineyard rises in the background.

Photos Andy Scheck

Italians, Romans, and even the Pope have played Bocce; and now, the sport with a touch of Italy is arriving in many Lamorinda back yards.

Constructing a home bocce court is not just a matter of pulling a few weeds, spreading a layer of sand, and inviting the neighbors over for a frame or two. Home courts involve landscaping, construction, design, and an experienced professional who understands your yard. Climate, sun and shade, drainage, maintenance, and the final touch, aesthetics, all weigh in to the equation.

This year, Alissa and Bill Scanlin embarked on a large landscaping project behind their sprawling Lafayette home. The Scanlins have had a vineyard since 1998, but wanted to expand the operation. Working with Mike McLane, of Michael's Landscape Construction, the couple decided a bocce court would be the perfect solution for the northeast corner of their yard.

"Whenever we played bocce, we always enjoyed it. Drinking a glass of wine and playing bocce: it's good entertainment," says Bill. "You can be talking about other things and still keep playing."

The sport's increasing popularity means many guests already know how to play, and even for the novices, the rules are simple, points out Alissa.

"The biggest challenge we had was making sure it didn't slide," Alissa says. "Because it's at the base of a hill." "We had drainage problems, with mud coming over the path before," Bill says, "but now, even the big rains don't cause trouble."

McLane says bocce courts are inherently simple, in terms of construction. "It's basically just building a rectangle. The most difficult part is to maintain a very fine level across the court." Most courts, without extensive grading issues like the Scanlins', can be completed within one week.

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