

# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 04 Issue 24 Wednesday, February 2, 2011



*Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian ...read on page OH6*

## Moving the Carefree Way

By Andrea A. Firth

Tracy loves interior design, and she likes unpacking. Kate owned her own gift basket company, so she hit the ground running. Florence had a long career in academia, and she now has extra time and energy. What do these three women have in common? They all have the organization gene—order is intrinsic to their nature—they know what to keep, what to throw away, and what to put where. And, they all work for Carefree Moves, a Lamorinda-based firm that will pack, unpack, organize, and stage your home when it's time for you to move.

"When it comes to organization, women get it. They have an instinct for how things should be put together," says Cynthia Nolan who, along with partner

Dee Vance, owns and operates the all-female moving business Carefree Moves.

\*There are real benefits to the company's all-female work force say Nolan and Vance. Most of the company's lady movers are from Lamorinda, and many have already raised a family and had a career. "They want flexibility, but they also want to help people, and they all have that inherent organization trait," says Vance. "We provide a complete array of moving service support, at the conclusion of a job, you see the beginning, middle, and end. The women we work with love seeing the finished, well-organized product so quickly."

Nolan and Vance brought their own penchant

for organization to the business when they purchased Carefree Moves two years ago. Nolan, a longtime resident of Orinda, has a background in design and managed a home staging business for over a decade. Vance who raised a family in Lafayette and now lives in Montclair, has over 25 years experience as a time management/organization consultant and life coach. When the two friends reconnected at a holiday gathering, they decided their skill sets were complementary and set out to launch a business together. Through networking they met the previous owner of Carefree Moves and within a few weeks they were in the moving business.

...continued on page OH4



Carefree Moves' owners Cynthia Nolan and Dee Vance (on left) with Kate Apple (in back) and Tracy Gittings.

Photo Doug Kohen

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## Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:
<b>LAFAYETTE</b>	4
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$325,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,165,000
<b>MORAGA</b>	1
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$702,500
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$702,500
<b>ORINDA</b>	8
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$575,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,174,000

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

- 141 Peaceful Lane, \$1,165,000, 5 Bdrms, 3489 SqFt, 1977 YrBl, 12-30-10;  
Previous Sale: \$768,000, 09-24-09
- 12 Ruth Court, \$325,000, 3 Bdrms, 1624 SqFt, 1950 YrBl, 12-28-10;  
Previous Sale: \$5,000, 06-09-72
- 1093 Upper Happy Valley Rd., \$1,100,000, 4 Bdrms, 3598 SqFt, 1939 YrBl, 1-5-11;  
Previous Sale: \$720,000, 02-28-03
- 3384 Woodview Drive, \$810,000, 5 Bdrms, 2322 SqFt, 1976 YrBl, 12-30-10;  
Previous Sale: \$820,000, 01-30-04

### MORAGA

- 131 Hazelwood Place, \$702,500, 3 Bdrms, 1909 SqFt, 1967 YrBl, 12-29-10;  
Previous Sale: \$500,000, 07-21-99

### ORINDA

- 11 Aspinwall Court, \$875,000, 4 Bdrms, 1905 SqFt, 1958 YrBl, 12-30-10;  
Previous Sale: \$945,000, 06-21-05
- 390 Camino Sobrante, \$620,000, 4 Bdrms, 2344 SqFt, 1958 YrBl, 12-23-10;  
Previous Sale: \$428,000, 03-26-01
- 10 Dias Dorados, \$1,174,000, 4 Bdrms, 2536 SqFt, 2008 YrBl, 12-30-10;  
Previous Sale: \$720,000, 05-23-08
- 149 Ivy Drive, \$655,000, 3 Bdrms, 1393 SqFt, 1956 YrBl, 1-5-11
- 37 Las Cascadas Road, \$800,000, 4 Bdrms, 2660 SqFt, 1960 YrBl, 12-28-10;  
Previous Sale: \$415,000, 02-29-96
- 30 Knickerbocker Lane, \$1,170,000, 4 Bdrms, 3567 SqFt, 1979 YrBl, 1-3-11;  
Previous Sale: \$818,000, 05-09-03
- 181 Moraga Way, \$575,000, 2 Bdrms, 1678 SqFt, 1960 YrBl, 12-28-10
- 25 Risa Court, \$780,000, 3 Bdrms, 1799 SqFt, 1959 YrBl, 1-7-11;  
Previous Sale: \$978,000, 03-24-05

## Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

### LAFAYETTE

- 1031 Sunrise Ridge Drive, 94549, JP Morgan Chase Bank, 01-10-11, \$1,004,500, 3422 sf, 4 bd

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# Moving the Carefree Way

...Continued from page OH1



While the name Carefree Moves might seem to be an oxymoron to many who consider moving time stressful, chaotic, and anything but organized, Nolan and Vance calmly assure that moving does not need to be that way. Starting with a clear plan is the key to easy set up on the other end, but they acknowledge that the process can be challenging. "Clients may have 40 years of life in their home to be moved, and the realtor has presented them with a deadline within a few weeks. They

don't know where to start," says Vance. Carefree Moves goes to the clients' next destination to determine what furniture and belongings will fit best, makes some recommendations, and creates a moving plan. "As a third party, they'll listen to us, and they appreciate the advice," adds Vance.

"The unpacking—that's one of the best assets our company provides," says Nolan. "Our professional organizers meet the moving truck at the other end. They line the kitchen shelves, organize the closets, and make the beds. That's what people love." Carefree Moves takes unpacking to the next level. They arrange furniture, hang pictures, and help clients create a new look. But if a client wants their new home to look just like the last, Carefree Moves is ready to oblige. They take photos to ensure they can recreate the same home arrangements. One of Carefree Moves' signature special touches is providing the transplants with a pot of homemade soup and fresh bread for their first dinner in their new home.

Despite the recent housing slump, Carefree Moves has been busy, and their team has expanded to include 14 lady movers. "We really focus on baby boomers," says Vance. We work with boomers who are downsizing,

help their parents move to alternate living settings, and relocate their working kids who are busy and moving up." Carefree Moves provides an array of services, and clients can choose their level of moving support. Nolan and Vance pride themselves in the green aspects they bring to the moving process. They carefully reuse packing materials when possible and recycle and donate unwanted salvageable items.

Every move is different, and each project is a new challenge, but the outcome is always the same according to Vance and Nolan. "Once we have a plan, we're set to go. We can see the light at the end of the tunnel," says Vance. "And then it's gratifying to see the client thrilled at the end. We all feel satisfied," says Nolan.

Carefree Moves

Cynthia Nolan and Dee Vance

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Kate at work packing the kitchen.

Photos Doug Kohlen

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## Cynthia Brian's Digging Deep Gardening Guide For Febuary

"There are two ways you can live your life - one as if nothing is a miracle, and the other as if everything is a miracle." -- Albert Einstein

Thank the heavens for the unfussy ubiquitous jonquil that waft away the weariness of winter's dark days with delicious scents. The crocus surprise and delight us as they pop up in the landscape. I personally am fond of the deep velvety moss covering brick walks, stone paths, and benches. The verdant green carpet reminds me of prehistoric forests. The occasional early daffodil stretches its golden head toward the scattered sunshine. February's dreariness is lessened with miracles from the garden.

- **BOOST** your spirits by buying a flowering houseplant for the kitchen.
- **ENROLL** in a gardening class.
- **SOAK** seeds of radishes, peas, beans, and alfalfa in a jar of water, drain, sprout, and eat.
- **READ** seed catalogues in preparation for choosing spring delights.
- **EXPLORE** a cactus garden. How about visiting the Ruth Bancroft Gardens in Walnut Creek? <http://www.ruthbancroftgarden.org/>
- **EXPERIMENT** with more sustainable methods of gardening by not using synthetic fertilizers or pesticides.
- **EXPERIENCE** the healthy heart benefits of the ripening citrus and add the juice to your freshly picked kale, Swiss chard, and spinach.
- **SHARE** your best rose canes with neighbors and friends. If you are interested in receiving any cuttings from my prize winning roses, email me at [Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com](mailto:Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com).
- **FIGHT** child obesity by growing your own vegetables and donating extras to a food pantry. If you have winter produce, share the wealth.
- **PROTECT** your hands from winter wear by applying lotion before putting on your garden gloves.
- **CLEAN** and sharpen your tools now. Make any repairs or replacements before spring springs.
- **FILL** your bird feeders weekly to keep our feathered friends in your garden during the cold season. If you feed them, they will come.
- **PHOTOGRAPH** an area of your garden and repeat every month to watch the changes.
- **WRITE** in your journal so you'll remember what each week brings to your outdoor sanctuary.
- **BRIGHTEN** the dismal days with a window box or porch pot of color spots available at your local garden center.
- **PLANT** succulents or cactus in a special sunny spot.
- **COVER** any frost tender plants with blankets or move inside the garage during the cold nights.
- **COMPOST**, compost, compost. I know you are tired of hearing me prod you, but this is an imperative ingredient of natural, organic gardening. Feed your soil and it will feed you.
- **HARVEST** winter cabbages, kale, Swiss chard, and spinach.
- **REMEMBER** your loved one on Valentine's Day with the gift of flowers from the florist or your backyard. (Add some dark chocolate for the lady in your life) Keep warm. Think sunny thoughts. Dream of spring light. Explore, experiment, experience. The splendor of the desert awaits your visit.

Happy gardening to you!



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# Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian-Prickly, Pretty, and Practical

*“To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves.” –Mahatma Gandhi*



Close up of the cornucopia of colors of succulents

Aside from celebrating Valentine's Day, February may be the least favorite month of the year for gardeners who live in the continental United States. It is wet, dark, dreary, and not very conducive to digging in the dirt. For me, February is the time to dream of tropical oases and desert charmers.

My parents gave each of us five children a small parcel of dirt on our farm with instructions to do whatever we wished with our gift. We could plant flowers, vegetables, weeds, or leave the land fallow. My brother chose to grow cactus for three reasons:

1. they were easy to maintain
2. they required little to no water
3. they kept away the rest of us

In my formative years, I didn't have an appreciation for succulents, cacti, or other desert plants. As an adult I'd like to add a fourth superlative to my brother's three – cactus and succulents are beautiful.

What are cacti? Part of the Cactaceae plant family, cacti is the plural for cactus, largest and most well known of succulent

plants with more than two thousand species growing in the Americas. Because their stems store water, they are excellent choices for plantings in arid, dry conditions or where water usage is restricted. All cacti are succulents but not all succulents are cactus. Succulents store water not only in their stems, but also in their leaves and roots often giving them a fleshy appearance. They developed in the Old World, whereas cactus evolved in our hemisphere. Only succulents that have spines can be called cactus. The good news is that you don't have to live in the desert to grow beautiful succulents and cactus.

When our children were quite young, we rode horses at a dude ranch in Arizona where the wilderness overflowed with cacti including thirty foot high Saguaro and two foot wide fish hook barrels. The cholas, with their dangerous needles and sharp barbs jumped out to grab us as we trotted. We didn't like cholas and made a note to never plant them. The kids were each given a tiny cactus in a pot as a souvenir. Over the

years they kept their respective cactus on their windowsills. Two decades later, these cacti are still thriving in the same containers, totally neglected, yet elegantly growing. Cacti require almost zero attention and if restricted, grow only as large as the pots in which they are planted.

My sister gave me a tiny prickly pear and my dad donated an agave. The flowers from the prickly pear are reminiscent of an orange sunset while the pear fruit adds zest to my salads. The nopales (the pads) are delicious as a cooked vegetable, tasting similar to green beans with a bit more fleshiness. (Note to the chef: Use tongs to peel both the pear and the nopales as they are prickly...hence the name prickly pear!) Planted in the ground, both have grown to many times their original size. The five-inch diameter agave gift has grown to twelve feet and spawned many an offspring. I have yet to attempt to make tequila but I thoroughly enjoy its impressive architecture in the landscape.

Since I'm not a fan of needles, my preference leans towards the spineless succulents. Here are a few of my very favorite specimens.

Sedum is a spectacular succulent for hot, sunny spots. With many different varieties, sedums combine color, texture, form, and flowers to interest any gardener. Many are low growing ground covers, others may

reach 18 inches or more. Perfect for rock gardens and spilling out of containers.

Aconium aborium- the black rose plant, is green with red edges, grows as a shrub to three feet both indoors and outdoors in full sun. Water every two weeks.

Crassula argentea-jade plant, is a succulent with tiny white blooms. Don't allow the soil to dry out. They are more finicky indoors but do great outdoors growing in bright light to ten feet. Great container plant, although the deer do love to eat them.

Sempervivum tectorum-hens and chicks produce clusters of rosettes which are the hens with the smaller rosettes being the chickens. Foliage can be red, light green, or a combination thereof. Easy to grow, they spread to two feet or more. Having always raised poultry, I adore this species of succulents. Propagate by picking off the chicks and planting elsewhere.

Agavoideae-agave plants are popular as ornamentals with their long, thick flesh leaves ending in a sharp point with a spine. Agaves are not cacti and they are not related to aloe. Stalks, flowers, leaves, and sap are edible. Only the Weber blue agave plants make tequila labeled as 100% blue agave. Be aware that getting the juice on your skin may cause a severe rash and acute dermatitis. Handle agaves with gloves and care.

...continued on page OH7



Succulent, Aconium Aborium

Photos Cynthia Brian

## Digging Deep

...Continued from page OH6

Aloe-aloe vera is plant that needs to be in a container in everyone's kitchen. It's an excellent first air remedy for burns, bites, and scratches. I break off a leaf and pour the thick gel directly on the wound. Aloe vera relieves itching and pain almost instantly.

Schlumbergera-Christmas Cactus is a favorite of every family for the holidays. The tips of the plant begin to grow darker, then magically a flower bursts into bloom in shades of pink, red, or white. They need more care than other cactus and are worth the trouble.

Hylotelephium-Formerly called a Sedum, Autumn Joy is a favorite low maintenance mainstay in my garden containers. Deep rose enation are borne on burgundy stems with green-blue leaves. Sedum is best pruned back in spring, then it sprouts again bearing clusters of flush pink flowers from summer through fall. You can break off a stem to plant anywhere. It grows with little water.

Stenocereus thurberi-organ pipe cactus is covered in spines and can grow to twenty-five feet with numerous ribs, but in a container it will remain small, which is the only way I'd want this cactus around. It boasts a pretty white cactus flower and requires only a few drops of water a month to thrive in a pot.

### How to grow succulents

There are thousands of succulents and cacti that will adapt well in Lamorinda gardens. Choose the forms, colors, and flowering patterns that you prefer. Succulents are excellent in rock gardens as well as containers and cacti may used as privacy hedges. Peruse your local garden center, ask lots of questions, and get the information you need about growing patterns, especially height, width, and root depth. Succulents prefer bright light, thriving in cool nights with warm days. They aren't that fussy about soil as long as it drains well. Add sand or perlite to increase aeration and drainage. In the summer months, succulents are thirsty. In winter, they may only require water every couple of months. Overwatering is the main cause of the demise of succulents. Better dry than die!

Cacti are macho plants. Use caution with these menacing monsters. Those spiky thorns protect the plants from animals and humans. Always wear long sleeves, pants, and gloves when handling cacti. My sister created a cacti fence around her barn to keep out the predators. It works! Succulents make wonderful dormitory gifts for university students who want a bit of nature inside but have little time for nurturing.

Looking back, my brother made a great choice for his plot of land. As water prices rise, we may be wise to look to these prickly, pretty, and practical plants as a viable alternative to living green.



Who says cactus don't grow in pine groves? Pine nuts and tequila anyone?  
Photo Cynthia Brian

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**MORAGA** (M)  
**2133 Donald Drive #14**  
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**Offered at \$135,000**



**MORAGA** (M)  
**1365B Camino Peral**  
 Comfortable 2bd/2ba, 1281 sf w/fireplace, washer/dryer, deck & 2 dedicated parking spaces. Near shopping, park, library and trails. Best schools!  
**Offered at \$299,000**



**MORAGA** (M)  
**2092-2094 Donald Drive**  
 Charming ranch-style duplex each w/2bd/1ba & 1-car garage. All dual panes, hdwd in LR, DR & kitchen, pvt backyard in wooded setting. Top schools.  
**Offered at \$699,000**



**MORAGA** (M)  
**39 Sea Pines**  
 Open floor plan, lg living rm, fam rm w/blt-ins, frplc & office area w/skylights. Eat-in kitchen w/slab granite, lots of storage. Borders 5th green. Great views.  
**Offered at \$730,000**



**MORAGA** (M)  
**1001 Carter Drive**  
 Pride of ownership, 4bd/2ba, 2064 sf in desirable St. Mary's Gardens neighborhood. Updated, hdwd flrs, close to trails, library & shopping. Top Moraga schools!  
**Offered at \$795,000**



**MORAGA** (M)  
**20 Greenfield Drive**  
 Lots of square footage, flexible floor plan, pvt lvl backyard, fabulous area for in-home office, convenient to elementary, trail. park. Wonderful home, great buy!  
**Offered at \$865,000**



**MORAGA** (M)  
**927 Augusta Drive**  
 Located at the end of a cul-de-sac, this professionally decorated home is most desirable. Privacy, views, and an open feeling make this a choice spot in Moraga Country Club.  
**Offered at \$1,020,000**



**MORAGA** (M)  
**160 Valley Hill Drive**  
 Fabulously remodeled 4bd/4ba ranch home on over 5 ac. just minutes from town. 3-stall barn, pastures and pool.  
**Offered at \$1,295,000**



**MORAGA** (M)  
**90 Courter Lane**  
 Elegant home built in 2000. 4bd + ofc, 3.5ba, beaut finishes throughout. 3-car garage w/cust storage. Fantastic locatio. Walk to school & shopping.  
**Offered at \$1,374,900**



**LAFAYETTE** (M)  
**3919 So. Peardale Drive**  
 Fabulous sgl lvl updated hm. Tons of natural light, hdwd flrs, vaulted ceilings, LR w/custome fireplace + sep alcove. Marvelous great rm, kit w/wine bar, sep pantry.  
**Offered at \$1,335,000**



**WALNUT CREEK** (M)  
**987 Monet Circle**  
 4bd/2.5ba built in 2000. High ceilings, loads of light. Convenient location close to shopping, commute, trails, etc. Elegant, functional home.  
**Offered at \$725,000**

## THE VILLAGE ASSOCIATES:

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- Patricia Battersby
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- Joan Eggers
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- Joan Evans
- Linda S Friedman
- Pamela Halloran
- Dexter Honens II
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