

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 05 Issue 13 Wednesday, August 31, 2011



*Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian
read on page D4*

Luxury Homes Rise at Wilder

By Diana LaScala-Gruenewald



Construction is nearly complete on a new home at Wilder.

Photo Tod Fierner

The Wilder exit lies just east of the Caldecott Tunnel on Highway 24, and pulls quickly away from the noise of traffic. Shortly the road drops over a hill, revealing a silent, stunning vista full of radiant yellows and greens and the elegant Mount Diablo. Nestled into this peaceful landscape are the beginnings of roads and homes. The Wilder property looks like a lovely phantom of what it will be within a year – one of the most beautiful residential areas of Lamorinda.

Wilder is a 1600 acre plot of private land, of which 300 acres are under development. 245 luxury homes are planned for the site, as well as five playing fields that can accommodate baseball and soccer, a tot lot and a private recreation center. According to OG Property spokesperson Jason Keadjian, the architecture of the development is intended to “encourage connections between the community and its natural surroundings.” To this end, the Wilder community will be connected to trailheads in the neighboring East Bay Regional Park District by paths called “meanders,” which are highly landscaped and will allow pedestrians to travel around the area with-

out walking on the street.

Despite delays in 2009 and an especially rainy spring, construction remains on schedule at Wilder. Today all five playing fields are under construction, as are a few homes. Landscaping and road building are under way. The Quarry House, the private recreation center that includes a gym and an outdoor pool, is completed.

The homes that are currently being built are scheduled to be finished and sold this coming fall. They will be roomy, with square footage varying from 2,000 to well over 5,000. Prices will range from 1.5 to 3 million dollars. Each house will feature many windows and porches with spectacular views of the California hills.

While construction at Wilder will continue for the next several years, this December could bring the property’s first residents. Tours of the area are available seven days a week; tourists can walk through the Quarry House and one of the new homes. Those interested should drop by the Ranch House at 2 Wilder Road and speak to Gerry Bakalian or Robin Rogers.

Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	14	\$415,000	\$2,695,000
MORAGA	6	\$420,000	\$935,000
ORINDA	9	\$553,000	\$2,100,000

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

849 Broadmoor Court, \$1,500,000, 4 Bdrms, 2549 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 7-28-11

318 Buckeye Court, \$1,000,000, 4 Bdrms, 2617 SqFt, 1969 YrBlt, 7-27-11;

Previous Sale: \$450,000, 01-30-98

29 Crest Road, \$750,000, 3 Bdrms, 2537 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 7-29-11;

Previous Sale: \$389,000, 02-04-93

3699 Highland Road, \$450,500, 4 Bdrms, 1727 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 7-29-11

847 Las Trampas Road, \$775,000, 4 Bdrms, 1921 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 7-22-11;

Previous Sale: \$389,000, 12-28-93

1092 Laurel Drive, \$780,000, 3 Bdrms, 1523 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 7-27-11;

Previous Sale: \$810,000, 04-11-07

3205 Lucas Circle, \$1,100,000, 4 Bdrms, 3185 SqFt, 1990 YrBlt, 7-22-11;

Previous Sale: \$590,000, 05-20-94

3386 Moraga Boulevard, \$639,000, 2 Bdrms, 886 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 7-28-11;

Previous Sale: \$736,000, 03-22-06

931 Mountain View Drive #E, \$415,000, 3 Bdrms, 1646 SqFt, 1983 YrBlt, 7-27-11;

Previous Sale: \$675,000, 10-27-06

2494 Pebble Beach Loop, \$560,000, 3 Bdrms, 1740 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 8-2-11

3152 Plymouth Road, \$535,000, 3 Bdrms, 1124 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 7-22-11

3443 St. Mary'S Road, \$640,000, 5 Bdrms, 2218 SqFt, 1925 YrBlt, 7-28-11;

Previous Sale: \$335,000, 09-16-92

1182 Upper Happy Valley Road, \$2,695,000, 3 Bdrms, 4320 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 7-26-11;

Previous Sale: \$284,500, 07-19-80

1904 Via Ferrari, \$849,000, 4 Bdrms, 2920 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 7-28-11

MORAGA

92 Buckingham Drive, \$795,000, 3 Bdrms, 1996 SqFt, 1969 YrBlt, 8-2-11;

Previous Sale: \$715,000, 02-20-03

5 Corte Fresca, \$935,000, 4 Bdrms, 2179 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 7-22-11

281 Fernwood Drive, \$920,000, 5 Bdrms, 3494 SqFt, 1981 YrBlt, 7-28-11;

Previous Sale: \$510,000, 05-28-92

190 Miramonte Drive, \$420,000, 2 Bdrms, 1525 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 7-27-11;

Previous Sale: \$340,000, 04-02-01

1147 Sanders Drive, \$699,000, 3 Bdrms, 1950 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 7-28-11;

Previous Sale: \$390,000, 09-03-92

36 Wandel Drive, \$689,000, 3 Bdrms, 1478 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 7-22-11

ORINDA

185 Camino Pablo, \$553,000, 2 Bdrms, 1040 SqFt, 1928 YrBlt, 7-29-11;

Previous Sale: \$186,000, 10-08-86

7 Charles Hill Lane, \$1,850,000, 3 Bdrms, 2966 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 7-22-11;

Previous Sale: \$60,000, 03-28-77

85 Coral Drive, \$758,000, 3 Bdrms, 1591 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 7-29-11;

Previous Sale: \$257,000, 04-15-93

1868 El Nido, \$2,100,000, 4 Bdrms, 4602 SqFt, 2001 YrBlt, 8-2-11;

Previous Sale: \$1,250,000, 04-20-00

328 Glorietta Boulevard, \$710,000, 3 Bdrms, 1679 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 8-2-11;

Previous Sale: \$745,000, 03-17-04

29 La Vuelta, \$1,150,000, 5 Bdrms, 3655 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 7-28-11

3 Mariposa Lane, \$895,000, 4 Bdrms, 1604 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 7-28-11;

Previous Sale: \$399,000, 08-23-96

48 Muth Drive, \$837,500, 3 Bdrms, 2519 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 7-22-11;

Previous Sale: \$1,087,500, 10-10-08

26 Oakwood Road, \$1,600,000, 4 Bdrms, 5067 SqFt, 2000 YrBlt, 7-29-11;

Previous Sale: \$3,500,000, 12-19-05



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California Trees

Darren lives his life with passion, and trees have been his passion since he was a kid, working with his father in the tree care company, he is a firm believer in the power of planning, and in the importance of giving back to those aspects of life that sustain you.

California has a rich horticultural history and many extraordinary specimens of trees can be seen in nearly every community here. Each of the many tree species provides unique form, texture, color and often aroma. These are the trees that provide shade, help to conserve energy, improves property value, reduces storm-water runoff, sequester CO2, mitigate air pollution, and make urban living healthier and more peaceful. "We all have a role to play in planning for the future of our trees". So invest in the future and plant the correct type of tree in the proper location.

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September, 2011

Digging Deep-Gardening with C The Lawn Ranger

By Cynthia Brian

"A lawn is nature under totalitarian rule!" Mich



*Lush, green, verdant lawns are for playing, cartwheeling, and memory making
Photos Cynthia Brian*



Thinking About Buying?

There's a saying that your biggest gains are to be made when you buy, not sell.

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Top 4 Opportunities in 2011

- 1) Buy foreclosures in select neighborhoods and cities in Contra Costa County, for strong rental income returns, with future appreciation.
- 2) Buy a home in Lafayette, Moraga, or Orinda, in a rare buyer's market.
- 3) Sell in the under \$1,000,000 range in Lamorinda, where sales are now improving, and move up to your dream house in a higher price range where the best negotiating opportunities exist.
- 4) Downsize, and sell in Lamorinda, where the market has not dropped as much, then buy a great one-story home at a bargain price in a nice neighborhood where homes have dropped more. Keep a low property tax by transferring it to the new house within Contra Costa County.

DRE# 1835783



Cynthia Brian

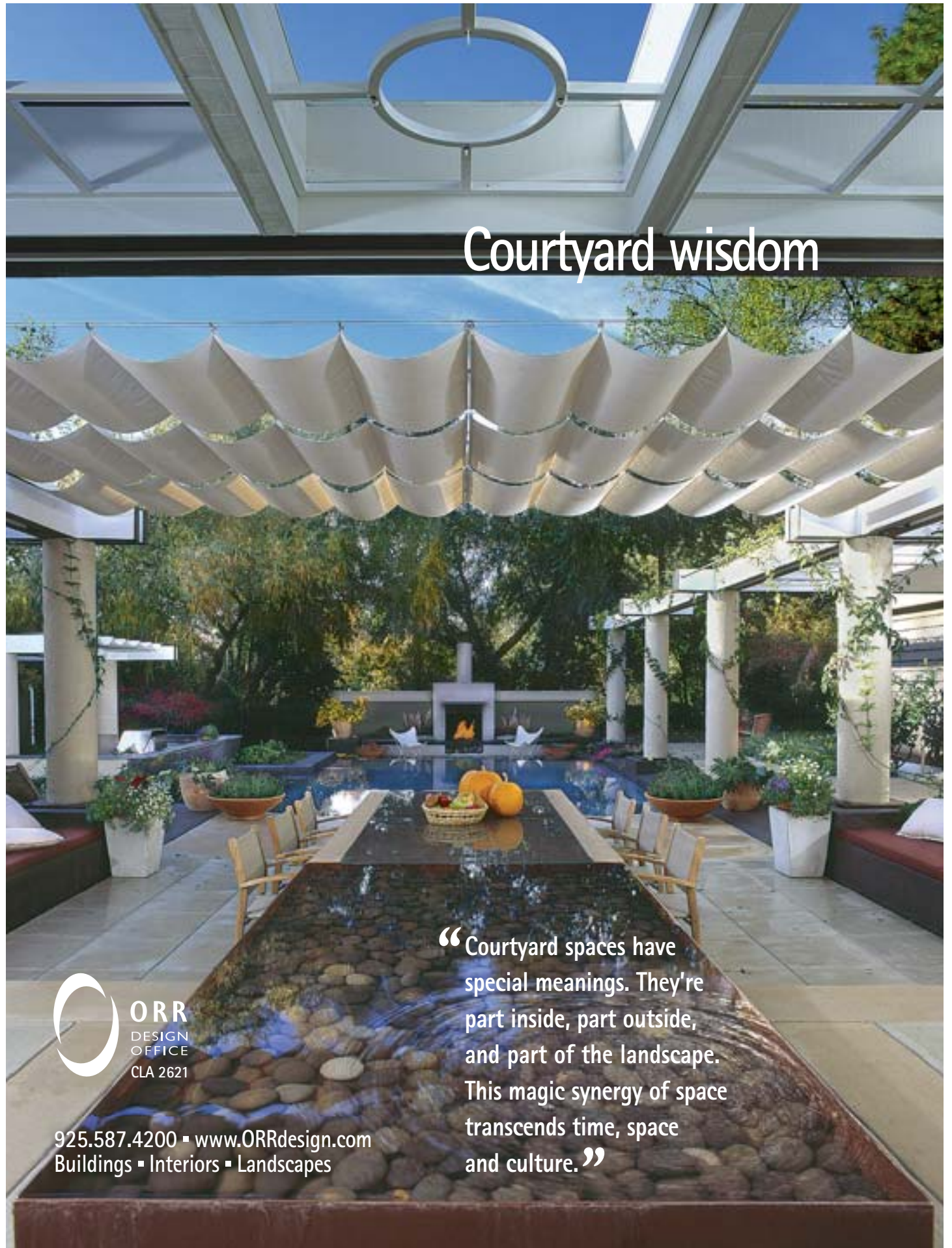
Michael Pollan

Lawns. People love them or hate them. There seems not to be an in-between.

I err on the side of adoration. Not politically or ecologically correct these days to live amongst the lawn lovers, for me, rich, green, luxurious turf hold magical memories worth the water and the work. Endless hours of enjoyment tumbling, somersaulting, cheerleading, Frisbee throwing, badminton, croquet, playing catch, football rumbles, horseshoes, and camping filled my childhood and that of my children on lawns. How wonderful it was to throw a towel on the grass and gaze at the clouds or meteor showers! Lawns were the location of training puppies, cuddling kittens, and collecting dandelions to blow in the wind as delicate angels of flight. In college, I'd take mini naps between classes lounging on the grass with my backpack as my pillow. A soft green carpet of inviting lawn has always been a welcome security blanket no matter where I've traveled throughout the world. Washington Irving said it best with his comment "Society is like a lawn where every roughness is smoothed, every bramble eradicated, and where the eye is delighted by the smiling verdure of a velvet surface." In short, lawns provide optimism about the world we live in.

If you are thinking about installing a patch of green, this is the time to begin the preparation. Fall is a great time to seed or sod in our part of the country. For both type of installations, you need to prepare the soil by removing weeds, rocks, stones, roots, and other plants.

... continued on page D6



Courtyard wisdom



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“Courtyard spaces have special meanings. They're part inside, part outside, and part of the landscape. This magic synergy of space transcends time, space and culture.”

September, 2011

Digging Deep-Gardening with Cynthia Brian ... continued from page D5



A close up of moss, a soft rug for small, damp areas.

If you've had a difficult time growing anything in your yard, get your soil tested and contact the University of California Extension office for advice. Once the site is level, the soil has been tilled and enriched, you are ready to scatter your seed or roll out the sod. If you have a small area to beautify, throwing seed covered in peat moss may be the best decision. I recommend netting the square to keep the hungry birds away from this dining buffet.

Most homeowners in Lamorinda demand instant beauty. If this describes you, sod is your answer. Although more costly initially, sod provides a thick, durable surface with immediate satisfaction. Think of sod as a yard of turf in box that rolls like a carpet into any space you wish. A sod combination of perennial rye grass mixed with pureblue grass provides a glossy green finish. Before you install sod, check out neighborhood lawns that you like. Be brave and ask the name of the variety of grass and the growing experience, then purchase the same type. Abide by the installation instructions, including specifications for watering, feeding, and mowing.

In general, lawns require more water than perennial gardens, including at least two fertilizations per year, in the spring and autumn, weekly mowing in the warm season, and occasional

de-thatching and aerating as needed. For strong root development, water in the morning, deeply and infrequently. My trick for a healthy lawn is to mulch with the lawn clippings by eliminating the catch bag while mowing plus raise the blade on the mower an inch higher. The longer grass keeps the roots cooler while the lawn clippings put nitrogen back into the soil. A daily weed-pulling trek around the perimeter deters the invasives. Although my husband disagrees with me, I enjoy infiltrating our lawn with the delicate, yet hardy isotoma blue star creeper for a splash of surprise. If your garden is extremely shady and wet, you may want to plant a patch of baby tears.

A popular alternative to the mow hungry traditional lawns is ornamental grass, such as silver blue fescue. These "almost maintenance free" grasses are available in a variety of heights, colors, and textures. They are especially useful on hillsides for erosion control and in places where minimal water is available. Lambs ears, dichondria, ajuga, and other ground covers can also be used in shadier areas where mowing is difficult. Iceplant has been used in dry areas, although I find it attractive only when it is flowering in the spring.

Gravel lawns are becoming increasingly popular. With our California outdoor lifestyle, gardeners who want to preserve water and spend minimal hours tending turf have begun installing floors of pea gravel or crushed stone. If this is your environmental choice, the depth of the gravel is critical. If it is laid too deep, you'll feel as though you are trudging through snow. Create a base layer of stones that are one or two inches in length, flatten with a compactor, then add two or three inches of crushed gravel or pea gravel on top for a very stable surface that drains well and weed free. If you are a bit artistic, allow volunteer plants such as verbena or silver spires of *Verbascum* to sprout for visual interest. Add a fountain or water feature, border the gravel carpet with large boulders, and beds of lavender, succulents, agaves, sunflowers, and native grasses. For a Southwestern look, throw in an old wagon wheel or rusty water pump to accessorize.

Outside my Starstyle® Studio, I have a bed of lush green moss under the redwood tree amid the rhododendrons and azaleas. On a hot day the soft coolness of the moss offers a refreshing

respite while conducting a consultation on the bench outside my office. Irish moss, Scotch moss, and creeping thyme can be lovely natural rugs in small patches.

Unless you plan on being a slave to your lawn, hiring a service, or paying exorbitant amounts for water and maintenance, don't compare your turf to the local golf course. It will never measure up. Perfectionists do not noble lawn caretakers make! But if you are a lawn ranger like me and ready to run through the sprinklers, put up with a few brown spots, and pull the occasional weed, your lawn will provide priceless life memories long after the expenses are forgotten.

Here's to cartwheels, sow bugs, hoses, and running barefoot through the grass. Long live lawns!



A sea of waving silver tipped ornamental grasses graces the hillside with watermelon crepe myrtle and the pink puffs of the Silk Tree in the background.



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Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

LAFAYETTE

Camino Colorados, Citibank, 07-27-11, \$596,250, 1678 sf, 4 bd

Martino Road, Bradford Communities, 08-01-11, \$772,018, 2800 sf, 3 bd

Springhill Road, Magnate Fund 2, 08-04-11, \$595,000, 3398 sf, 4 bd

MORAGA

Ascot Drive, Harborview Mortgage, 07-13-11, \$190,755, 1068 sf, 2 bd

Donald Drive, Just Properties, 07-28-11, \$87,251, 560 sf, 1 bd



Cynthia Brian's Garden Guide for September

"The apple does not fall far from the tree!" Yiddish proverb

September is apple season. I fondly remember 4-H events as a child where we "bobbed for apples" sticking our heads into a barrel of water filled with floating pommies. Thinking back, it doesn't seem very sanitary, yet no one ever got sick. Perhaps the adage about "an apple a day keeps the doctor away" is indeed true. School is back in session and apples make a healthy, nutritious, low calorie snack packed with fiber. As you tend your autumn garden, involve your children in your activities. They will learn to be stewards of our planet by watching your choices and participating in your passions. I definitely didn't fall far from my farm family tree.

- BOOST your healing power by plucking ripe tomatoes straight from the vine. Classified as both a vegetable and a fruit, the primary nutrient in tomatoes is lycopene, a powerful antioxidant that neutralizes free radicals and possibly guards against your risk of heart disease, osteoporosis, and diabetes.
- BREATHE new life into a tired vegetable garden by adding a playful combination of fall weather crops with festive grey-blue hues such as cilantro, kale, and ornamental cabbages.
- VISIT the Be the Star You Are!® charity booth at the Moraga Pear Festival on Saturday, September 24th for complimentary seeds. Buy an autographed copy of the New York Times best seller, Chicken Soup for the Gardener's Soul and Be the Star You Are!® for TEENS to receive FREE potpourri. You'll be supporting the tornado torn schools and hospitals in Joplin, Missouri.
- THIN perennials and transplant to other parts of your garden or share with neighbors.
- FEED camellias, roses, azaleas, gardenias, and fruit trees.
- CHECK out the new bulbs for spring available now from catalogues and some retailers. Next year's daffodils are sensational.
- SUBSCRIBE to a CSA program (Community Supported Agriculture) for farm fresh produce shipped to your home if you don't have your own vegetable garden or fruit orchard yet want the freshest seasonal favorites.
- DOWNLOAD the Bonide Best Solutions app which helps consumers search by name or photo to identify a problem with pests, weeds, and diseases. Available for iPhones, Droid, and Blackberry.
- GOPHER-PROOF your garden by building raised beds with a wire mesh bottom. If you already have gophers, try putting a stick of chewing gum or Exlax down their hole. Let me know your results!
- SOW seeds of short season varieties of vegetables and herbs that tolerate cooler nights and shorter days for a late fall feast. Experiment with mesclun mixes, salad greens, arugula, peas, dill, and broccoli raab.
- PARTY on the patio with all the elements of great entertaining by having the sounds of a fountain nearby, fall colored leaves as table ornaments, and a fire pit to warm the guests as the evening chills.
- PROPOGATE lilies by removing a few scales from the outside of a parent bulb then providing a clean tray filled with sphagnum moss or vermiculite until bulblets form. Make sure to label the type of lily bulb you are growing.
- EXPERIMENT in shady areas by planting varieties of ferns. Ferns tolerate moist to moderately dry soil, and the best news is, drum roll please... deer detest them.
- ADD botanical diversity to a barren or deprived site by collecting

your perennial seeds and tossing them in those horticultural challenged arenas.

- SEND me high quality pics of your glorious garden with a description and they may get published. Email Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com.
- TAP into your inner rainbow by coordinating colorful autumn annuals with the changes in the leaves for your front garden.
- CUT bouquets of the perky pink Naked Ladies for a long-lived indoor arrangement. I love these glorious gals, and hooray, another floriferous favorite despised by the dear deer!
- EAT fresh, crisp red, green, or yellow apples straight from the tree. Don't peel them as 2/3 of the antioxidants and most of the nutrition is in the peel! When some of your crop falls to the ground, make applesauce. Did you know that 2500 varieties of apples grow in the United States with 7500 varieties growing around the world!

See you at the Pear Festival in Moraga on Saturday, September 24th. Looking forward to swapping lawn lore!

Happy Gardening to You!

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Cynthia Brian
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ORINDA

New Listing

220 The Knoll

Fabulous 2+bd/2.5 ba end unit in desirable Orindawoods. Beaut updated, spacious & pvt. Eat in kit, sep fam rm + ofc which could be 3rd bd. Tons of natural light, vaulted ceilings, skylights. **Offered at \$825,000**



ORINDA

30 Rio Vista

Charming "Pottery Barn" 3bd/2ba 1978 sf trad on .42 ac in pvt setting adj to open space. Updated kit w/granite, updated baths, new paint & carpet, most dual panes, lvl lawn/play area. **Offered at \$899,000**



ORINDA

24 Lavenida

Impeccably maintained & exquisitely expanded 2410 sf custom hm. Gorgeous grounds w/lvl lawns, gardens, shaded deck overlooking creek. Stunning pvt mstr suite, quiet cul de sac. **Offered at \$1,029,000**



ORINDA

New Listing

345 Camino Sobrante

Updated 4bd/3ba 3301 sf contemp on .55 ac in primo country club loc. Spacious Great Room, updated kitchen, hdwd flrs, most dual panes, lower lvl guest apt w/pvt entrance, ofc, lvl lawn. **Offered at \$1,100,000**



ORINDA

99 La Cuesta

Stunning OCC custom home at end of quiet cul de sac. Beautifully renovated w/vaulted ceilings, dual pane windows, wood floors, granite/stainless kitchen, lovely lawn/garden. Views. **Offered at \$1,179,000**



ORINDA

50 Haciendas

Classic Old Orinda estate home off sought-after Oak Arbor. Prime 1 ac parcel at end of court. 5bd/5ba, 5110 sf architecturally designed by Wm Knowles. Spectacular setting w/lawns, gardens, pool. **Offered at \$1,895,000**



ORINDA

20 Monterey Terrace

Stunning 5000+ sf estate hm on close-in cul de sac. Custom blt for orig owners w/soaring ceilings, gorgeous kitchen w/adj fam rm, pvt mstr retreat. Sep in-law apt. Lovely views, lvl yd. **Offered at \$1,899,000**



ORINDA

136 Manzanita

Santa Barbara style in Orinda. New construction 4000 sf 4bd/3.5ba of incredible design & custom craftsmanship. A world of charm for ideal family living yet perfect for sophisticated entertaining. **Offered at \$2,195,000**



MORAGA

527 Chalda Way

Enjoy private attractive courtyard - charming updated 2bd/1.5ba townhome with Shaker-style cabinetry, granite counters, great convenient location. **Offered at \$319,000**



MORAGA

272 Tharp Drive

Move right in. Lovely sgl lvl 3bd/2ba hm w/great curb appeal. Hdwd flrs, fresh paint, newer appliances. Great location, conv to schools & Rancho Laguna Park. Beaut landscaping. **Offered at \$699,000**



LAFAYETTE

11 Buckingham

Terrific 3bd/2ba home! Open floor plan with remodeled living/dining rooms and kitchen. Expanded master. Great yard with new paver patio & large lawn. **Offered at \$739,000**



LAFAYETTE

859 Acalanes Road

Totally remodeled & landscaped to perfection. Artistic touches thruout. Gourmet kit w/cherry cabinets & granite counters. Beaut views from this pvt home w/iron gate enty, long pvt driveway. **Offered at \$1,125,000**



LAFAYETTE

614 Huntleigh Drive

Terrific open floor plan w/remod kitchen w/gorgeous granite counters. Vaulted ceilings, maple hdwd floors, remod baths, new roof, level yard w/terrific views. Very private & quiet. **Offered at \$1,229,000**



LAFAYETTE

3407 Shangri La

Fabulous 4bd/3.5ba Craftsman style blt in '05. Stunning architectural integrity, beaut craftsmanship, high end features. Serene setting, 1.08 ac in Reliez Valley, lovely yd w/lawn, play area. **Offered at \$1,495,000**



WALNUT CREEK

664 Charleston Court

Fabulous 3bd/2.5ba 2-story detached home built in '94. Very spacious, light & bright on quiet court. Gorgeous remodeled kitchen, private yard. **Offered at \$519,000**



WALNUT CREEK

1296 Rudgear Road

Sustainable gardener's paradise! Delightful energy efficient hm on flat approx. 1/3 ac. Solar panels, remod kitchen, "green" materials. Hardwood floors. Separate studio for home office. **Offered at \$599,000**

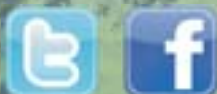
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