

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 08 Issue 19 Wednesday, November 19, 2014



*Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian
...read on page D9*

Hit the Deck

Regular maintenance can prolong the lives of outdoor spaces

By Chris Lavin



Richard Houghton is a tall man with a big smile and an unusual passion.

“I could talk decks all day,” Houghton said with surprising enthusiasm for the subject. “And all night. You’ll have to shut me up.”

Houghton has sanded, repaired or otherwise built from scratch more than 3,000 decks in the area, probably 2,000 of them in Lamorinda.

“Now is the time, before we get too much rain,” he said. “You’ve got to get the debris out from between the grooves or you’re going to hold the moisture in there, and it’s going to rot a lot sooner than it otherwise would.”

And that takes time, and regularity. Decks can be such a pain sometimes that not everyone is a fan.

“I hate decks,” said Gloria Lenhart of Lafayette. “I did have decks and hated them, but I don’t have one now. Here’s the problem with decks: They are maintenance nightmares which require regular sanding, sealing and repairing. I once lived in a house with three decks and every year we sanded down and re-sealed one of them. A never-ending task. In this house I have a concrete patio. All you have to do is sweep it off occasionally, and really you don’t even have to do that!”

Houghton understands this sentiment and sees it in his customers. So he came up with a solution: On one of his jobs he found a woman using a nifty tool that she had ordered from Sunset magazine – a deck flosser. So Houghton tracked down the tool and bought a couple of them. Over the years, they didn’t hold up so well, but the inventor didn’t want anything to do with them. So he just told Houghton: “You can have it. You make ‘em.”

So with his usual enthusiasm Houghton got to work. He set up a workshop in his garage (with a retinal scanner to get in and security cameras galore), improved on the design, applied for a patent, and now he’s in distribution mode. (He turned out to be fibbing about the retinal scanner and cameras.)

... continued on page D4

Jack Champlin of Lafayette repaired his deck so that his family would have a dining area while the kitchen was being renovated. Photo Chris Lavin



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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	10	\$835,000	\$3,080,000
MORAGA	5	\$335,000	\$1,299,000
ORINDA	5	\$1,082,000	\$1,400,000

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

3318 Beechwood Drive, \$1,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 1499 SqFt, 1946 YrBlt, 10-17-14;

Previous Sale: \$983,000, 05-01-07

3966 Cowan Road, \$1,795,000, 4 Bdrms, 2754 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 10-10-14;

Previous Sale: \$245,000, 07-12-85

3984 El Nido Ranch Road, \$1,705,000, 4 Bdrms, 3843 SqFt, 1991 YrBlt, 10-15-14;

Previous Sale: \$989,000, 04-14-00

715 Glenside Circle, \$1,400,000, 3 Bdrms, 2016 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 10-17-14;

Previous Sale: \$795,000, 11-08-01

474 Helen Avenue, \$835,500, 3 Bdrms, 1651 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 10-17-14;

Previous Sale: \$38,500, 06-23-71

3794 Highland Road, \$1,091,000, 3 Bdrms, 2125 SqFt, 1983 YrBlt, 10-13-14;

Previous Sale: \$803,000, 09-10-04

1834 Ivanhoe Avenue, \$1,512,500, 5 Bdrms, 3638 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 10-10-14

3 Lark Creek Lane, \$3,080,000, 4 Bdrms, 4550 SqFt, 2000 YrBlt, 10-17-14;

Previous Sale: \$1,950,000, 04-09-02

3416 Moraga Boulevard, \$835,000, 2 Bdrms, 929 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 10-17-14;

Previous Sale: \$700,000, 03-01-06

3023 Rohrer Drive, \$1,225,000, 3 Bdrms, 1808 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 10-10-14;

Previous Sale: \$862,000, 12-11-02

MORAGA

624 Augusta Drive, \$1,299,000, 4 Bdrms, 2680 SqFt, 1976 YrBlt, 10-17-14;

Previous Sale: \$1,225,000, 11-02-06

8 Baltusrol Street, \$780,000, 3 Bdrms, 1749 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 10-10-14;

Previous Sale: \$690,000, 03-14-08

1040 Del Rio Way, \$1,005,000, 4 Bdrms, 2189 SqFt, 1969 YrBlt, 10-14-14

2145 Donald Drive #14, \$335,000, 2 Bdrms, 1162 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 10-15-14;

Previous Sale: \$460,000, 06-22-05

8 La Salle Drive, \$739,000, 3 Bdrms, 1573 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 10-17-14

ORINDA

641 Cross Ridge Court, \$1,350,000, 3 Bdrms, 2113 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 10-15-14;

Previous Sale: \$760,000, 03-29-02

649 Cross Ridge Court, \$1,175,000, 4 Bdrms, 2866 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 10-13-14

16 Rich Acres Road, \$1,082,000, 3 Bdrms, 2404 SqFt, 1976 YrBlt, 10-15-14;

Previous Sale: \$450,000, 07-20-89

28 Via Moraga, \$1,400,000, 4 Bdrms, 2655 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 10-16-14;

Previous Sale: \$470,000, 04-01-94

627 Watchwood Road, \$1,245,000, 3 Bdrms, 2541 SqFt, 1987 YrBlt, 10-14-14;

Previous Sale: \$965,000, 02-28-03



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Hit the Deck

... continued from page D1



Richard Houghton demonstrates his nifty Groove Cleaner that he builds himself in his garage.

"I love this thing," Houghton said, picking it up and turning it in his hand like a fine gem. "It works great."

Bill Snider at Moraga Hardware and Lumber is the first one to carry prototypes, although they haven't decided how much to price them for. "That's my wife's job," Houghton said. "She owns the company."



For more than 40 years Houghton has helped people fix, build and maintain their decks. It's really not that tough, he said. His checklist:

- Make sure the debris is out between the grooves.
- Sand them down when they get rough. Water can collect in the cracks, freeze, or start to do its rotting thing.
- Pound the nails flush with the surface first.
- Sweep or blow the decks if wet material has fallen.
- Seal, seal, seal with a good sealant.
- Inspect above and below for rot and weak spots.
- And sometimes, he admits, you just have to replace them.

Houghton said homeowners can typically expect to spend between \$25 and \$35 per square foot for full all-out replacement or deck additions. Unfortunately, he said, California this year passed a 1 percent surcharge on cut lumber, and even if the owner decided to go with composite materials for the decking itself, the under-story still has to be constructed with wood, adding to the final cost.

Houghton didn't use to like the composite materials, called Trex. The first generations of the material were simply made of shredded plastic bottles, made into pellets, and melted together. "But they found that water could get into the spaces between the pellets and when it froze, the stuff fell apart," he said.

Not good. Now the company is on its sixth generation. "It does last longer than redwood," he said, "but most people really love the warm look of redwood."

Houghton runs Fine Line Renovations at decksbyfineline.com.



Houghton inspects the under-story of a deck for dry rot.

Photos Chris Lavin

To my dear clients,
**thank you for letting me
help you find the right fit
*this year***



FINDING THE RIGHT FIT



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Stylish Solutions

Creating a 'Welcome Home' Feel for Holiday Guests

By Ann McDonald



Guest bedroom in a cabin. Hudson Bay slippers that match the room make guests feel like no detail is overlooked. Photo Peter Medilek

The turkey is ordered, the farmers' market run is on the calendar and you are getting your home ready to host family and friends for the Thanksgiving holiday. We chatted last month about setting the table and creating an inviting atmosphere but what about the rooms where your guests will stay? In my home, we have several rooms that are multi-purpose but we don't have a dedicated guest room. Each time we have overnight guests, there is some kind of transition that has to take place in addition to the deeper cleaning required with a house full of boys and pets.

I confess, in years past I would panic. Did I clean under the desk? Are dirty socks in the closet? What about the dust ruffles on the day beds? When were they last cleaned? Is there dog hair that I no longer see? Maybe you have a series of questions that run through your mind each time guests come to stay.

Here's how this fussy decorator finally conquered those last minute details:

1. Make lists for specific guests. One of my biggest issues is the "what if" question. We have several relatives who bring with them different requirements. I would often run through my mental checklist and then worry – what am I forgetting that pertains directly to them? It finally hit me. Make a list (in some cases a file) that pertains to that guest only. Edit what worked and what didn't after they leave.

We have a pet friendly home and as an animal lover, I welcome the pets that come with their people. As such, it's important to me that pets have a nice time as well. Extra pet beds? Check. Extra bowls? Check. Appropriate leashes and treats? Check.

For generational differences, it's important to think outside the box. For elderly guests I always make sure to have items they may need but may not necessarily want to have to ask about. Be gracious and simply present 'personals' in a pretty storage box or basket in their room. Don't forget extra reading glasses, extra reading lights, pens and paper on the desk next to the bed, a comfortable chair in the bedroom and Advil or Tylenol for a stiffened knee. Always cap off a guest room, especially a temporarily converted space in your home with a pretty flower in a vase.

These little things indicate you care enough to know what they might need. Protect their privacy and give honor as best you can, especially when there is no official guest room. I keep copies of these check lists handy both in my design studio and in the laundry room in case I bring in a home helper to set up the space. One list for her, one list for me equals no missed items!

2. Shop for and style vignettes by color. Because we have multi-function rooms, the bedding my teenage sons use is not necessarily the same bedding I want my mother- and father-in-law to enjoy while they stay. I create separate vignettes for different guests or by room and use color to separate them.

This helps me keep track of which items go together and there is no back and forth over last-minute design issues. We

did this for a single person guest suite in a cabin. With bold Hudson Bay blankets as the anchor, every detail was whimsical and fun, down to the matching slippers. Because guests aren't long term, it's OK to have some fun with the bedding.

... continued on next page



Using decorative pillows can take an ordinary kid's bedroom and bump it up for guests. Featured is a Couture Chateau pillow, lined and interlined made from an antique textile. Photo Couture Chateau llc



When outfitting a cabin or second home, order slippers, embroidered robes and towels – black makeup towels are great. For a lovely guest experience at home, even and especially if you are using a sofa bed or child's room converted for the night, consider investing in a few designer robes with a simple monogram or "guest." Photo Couture Chateau llc



Use hooks inside double duty rooms for easy care items like robes, towels and even welcome notes for guests. Photo Couture Chateau llc

3. Use designated baskets for specific vignettes and include every item for easy set up. For those with smaller homes or no guest bedroom, this is one of my top tips. We create a designated basket and essentially create our own version of “room in a basket” with: sheets, bed coverlet, mattress cover, nice towels, embroidered robe, slippers, beautiful pillows both for sleeping and decoration, soaps, shampoos, sewing kit and other sundries.

This way, when ‘Guest A’ is on her way, we know to pull the Blue Toile Basket and set up the spare studio space and guest bath accordingly. I will sometimes include a photo of how the space was set up last time just for easy reference.

I store the completed baskets in the laundry room or storage area under the house and confess I do shop year-round to take advantage of luxury sales so these sets are the best quality I can afford.

Finally, I cannot stress the importance of immediately washing, folding and re-storing in the proper basket, the vignette you created. The next time you need it, there is no running around and your fresh towels don’t end up on the pool deck or washing a car.

As more of us are working from home or finding our spaces have to do double duty, these stylish solutions keep us on trend and feeling like we’ve made an honorable effort when hosting out-of-town guests. It’s not about having a royal-sized guest room, though those can be fun and fabulous, it’s about creating a home where your guests are honored and feel welcomed, no matter the size.

Details like a dog treat for a cherished pet, a beautiful pillow that is just theirs or a makeup towel and extra set of reading glasses goes a long way.

May your holiday home be filled with laughter and good cheer. Happy Thanksgiving!

Do you need help with your remodel or design project? Give us a call at (925) 386-0720 or email us at ann@couturechateau.com.



Ann McDonald, IIDA, NAPO, is the Founder/CEO of Couture Chateau, a luxury interior design firm in Orinda. For a complete blog post including photos of different guest hosting ideas, visit www.couturechateau.com/blog.



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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

Garden Gratitude

By Cynthia Brian

"Gratitude is the fairest blossom which springs from the soul." – Henry Ward Beecher



What would Thanksgiving be without turkeys ... eating our grubs?

Photo Cynthia Brian

As Thanksgiving approaches we find ourselves giving thanks for our family, friends, health, and jobs. But how often do we stop to give gratitude for Mother Nature? As I strolled through my garden during my morning meditation walk, I was overcome with appreciation for the natural world that surrounded me. My garden enhances and nourishes all of my senses. The fiery ruby leaves on my liquid amber or the saffron pumpkin cloaked potted pistache in their autumnal wardrobe add a carnival of color to the landscape. The fragrance from my Angel Face roses is a sweet scent that I dream of bottling. The quail calling to one another, the gurgling of the fountain, and the whistling of the wind through the palms are sounds that calm my spirit and engage my inspiration. On my rounds, I always stop to sample the edibles, tasting the new florets on my cabbage, a sprig of mint to freshen my breath, or plucking a few cumquats to add to my afternoon tea. Touching everything, I arrive back in my kitchen with bouquets of blossoms or moss covered branches to decorate my desk and most of all, to stimulate my creativity. Over the years, I've developed a sixth sense surrounding my outside world. I feel more connected to life, to nature, and to myself while I'm in the garden. And I am grateful for the kinship.

Our gardens are growing universities, teaching us daily the values for enhanced living. From my garden teacher I have learned patience, responsibility, gentleness, kindness, and forgiveness. There are no mistakes in nature and failure is just fertilizer. When it began to rain the last day of October, I quickly ran to fertilize my brown, dry lawn. Today it is emerald green, instructing me about the importance of resiliency.

... continued on page D11



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Cynthia Brian's Mid-Month Reminders

- **FERTILIZE** your lawn and yard at the first drops of rain. We've had a warm fall, so it's not too late to give a jolt of nutrition to help the landscape withstand the winter months.
- **PICK** fuyu persimmons now to eat and enjoy fresh, in salads, or other appetizers. As soon as your Hachiya persimmons are bright orange, they can also be harvested, however, they cannot be eaten until soft.
- **PLANT** chrysanthemums to brighten your walkways, containers, and patio.
- **ADD** a tropical flair to your Thanksgiving décor with an arrangement of the beautiful orange Birds of Paradise.
- **CONGRATULATE** the wild turkeys crossing through your landscape. They are lucky they are still eating grubs and not part of the Thanksgiving feast!
- **PLANT** easy to grow, low maintenance Dutch iris, snowdrops, grape hyacinth, daffodils and other spring bulbs for a surprise splash of color come March or April.
- **DIVIDE** overgrown perennials.
- **RAKE** leaves, adding them to the mulching pile. Let your kids frolic in them first, making memories that last a lifetime.
- **WEED** weekly as the rains come to avoid an overabundance of unwanted plants in spring.
- **SOW** wild flower seeds for a natural, woody look.
- **GIVE** thanks for your garden, our hills, valleys, and Mother Nature.



Fuyu persimmons are ripe for the plucking. Eat them like apples or add to salads.



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The ideal time to plant trees and shrubs is during the dormant season—in the fall after their leaves drop or early spring before bud breaks. Weather conditions are cool and allow plants to establish roots in the new location. The proper handling during planting is essential to ensure a healthy future for new trees and shrubs.

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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian Garden Gratitude

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We all bounce back from challenges and tomorrow is another day.

This year when we celebrate Thanksgiving, my table will be laden with the goodness from my garden including my mashed home grown potatoes infused with thyme, sage, and rosemary, a wine roasted turkey stuffed with orchard apples, onions, and grapes, plus a fresh picked salad of baby lettuces, arugula, kale, fennel, and sliced Fuji persimmons. Grace will be one of gratitude for the bounty and beauty that Mother Nature provides every day of the year, no matter what the season.

As I leave work in San Francisco, each time I witness the spectacular sunset in my rear view mirror going east on the Bay Bridge, I breathe a sigh of relief as the grazing cows on the hillside come into view. The forests of trees, the smell of the wild grasses, the capaciousness of our open spaces, and the sounds of birds replace the honking horns, crowded streets, and urine soaked sidewalk odors of the city. I give thanks that I have the opportunity to spend my days in a tranquil environment where I breathe clean air and enjoy the lushness of the valleys within a short drive of cultural amenities. Even the eerie howls of the coyotes singing at the moon, the herds of hungry deer dining along my driveway, and the wild turkeys roosting in my pines roots me in gratitude for my rustic simplicity.

I am home. And home is where my heart is.

May you enjoy a cornucopia of blessings and joy this November with your loved ones. Thank you for being such dedicated, involved readers. I appreciate you.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing. Happy Thanksgiving.

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ORINDA



40 Dos Osos
 Incredible Orinda, San Pablo Dam, Mt. Diablo views + abundance of nature surrounds this supersized parcel bordering EBMUD lane. Once in a lifetime opportunity raw land sale.
\$489,000

ORINDA



New Listing

21 Cedar Lane
 Great potential 4bd/2.5ba home. Large lot in exclusive Orinda neighborhood. Great bones with walls of windows, open floor plan & room to expand. Ready for major rehab.
\$895,000

ORINDA



56 La Vuelta
 Country Club Contemporary 2,472 sf home offers bright, open living spaces & gorgeous views. Well appointed 4 bedrooms & 3 baths. Kitchen/ family room layout inviting & ideal for entertaining.
\$1,028,500

ORINDA



345 Camino Sobrante
 All New Decks! Updated 4bd/3ba, 3301sf contemp. on .55ac in primo country club loc. Spacious great rm, updated kit.; hrdwd flrs; lower lvl guest apt w/priv. entr; close to BART & Top Schools.
\$1,295,000

ORINDA



New Listing

500 Dalewood Drive
 Beautiful home w/lots of pride of ownership. Very private. Two Master Suites of his/hers. One level living w/large Living Rm, formal Din Rm, open Kitchen to FR w/refreshment bar. 2 car garage.
\$1,925,000

ORINDA



92 Sandhill Road
 Estate setting of unmatched appeal. Large spaces plus modern design allure for appealing family living or grand scale entertaining. Fabulous views of valley & Briones reservoir/sunsets.
\$4,475,000

MORAGA



New Listing

157 Miramonte Drive
 Fantastic bright townhome overlooking MCC Golf Course, including 2 carports each w/storage. New oak hrdwd flrs, wall to wall carpets & freshly painted. Fenced patio. Walk to Miramonte High.
\$629,900

MORAGA



New Listing

82 Miramonte Drive
 Fantastic Miramonte Gardens Opportunity. Rare 1798sf, 4bd/3ba, updated twnhm w/new carpet, updated kitchen, dual pane windows, expansive bkyd/patio. Conv. locale w/2 carports & storage.
\$630,000

LAFAYETTE



3921 Happy Valley Road
 Stunning 4600+sf custom 4bd/3.5ba gated estate on 1ac in heart of H.V. Pool, pano views. Hrdwd flrs, kit. w/island, granite, & SS appls open to fam rm, game rm. Close to top rated schools, commute.
\$2,795,000

LAFAYETTE



23 Sessions Road
 Gated English Manor 12.18 acre 5bd/6ba Estate. Grand foyer, living, family rooms + "Club" room, deluxe kitchen, dramatic solarium + executive office. Gorgeous grounds w/lap pool/lawns, views.
\$3,895,000

LAFAYETTE



1141 Vallecito Court
 Treasured Happy Valley 6bd/5.5ba estate custom built in 2006 with the finest craftsmanship & materials. Spectacular yard w/pool, spa, fireplace & level lawn. Guest house. Privacy & views.
\$3,900,000

PLEASANT HILL



20 Whitfield Court
 Great 2.58 acre parcel at top of knoll with views of Mount Diablo & ideal privacy. Truly special setting sites for development zoned R-10 & R-15. Wonderful opportunity for investment.
\$1,950,000

93 Moraga Way, Suite 103 • Orinda, CA 94563 • Phone: (925) 254-0505

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