

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 08 Issue 21 Wednesday, December 17, 2014



O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum

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Signature Trees Speak for Themselves

Lone trees or a collection can define a home's personality

By Chris Lavin

While many homeowners take painstaking care to keep their lawns and properties in top curb-appeal condition – or at least make every attempt to keep them that way – sometimes it's the lone tree that takes charge, calls us to attention, and alerts us to its spectacular presence. The house itself is secondary. These are “signature trees,” trees that define their landscape, put the house in perspective.

Like seeing the splash from a Japanese maple that could not possibly be that true to the color red and simply must have been painted on by the fire department, trees can create the “wow” effect like nothing else in the front of a home. Gone are the yard ornaments, the trimmed lawn, the potted azalea or the wreaths on the door. The tree stands alone.

“The decision to plant a particular tree is really important,” says Geoff Olmstead, the nursery manager for Orchard Nursery in Lafayette, who has helped hundreds of Lamorindans make the right decision. “It can make a huge difference in how your house looks, how to present your house to others.”

Walk back into the nursery with Olmstead and one starts to get barraged by Latin names that don't help someone who doesn't know a *borealis* from a *gigantum*. (Those probably aren't even trees.) That doesn't deter Olmstead, though, because he is capable of quickly changing to regular-person-speak.

“So first, how big would you want it to get?” he asks. When told, let's say, about 100 feet, he throws back his head and laughs loudly. “Really? I



A Japanese maple brightens up the exterior of this home.

Photo Jennifer Wake

don't think too many trees get that tall, not even oaks. Redwoods will. People think they want redwoods but they don't really want redwoods.”

Which of course leads a person who is still amazed that the spell-check on the computer accepted “borealis” to an obvious question for Mr.

Olmstead: Why not? (She means, *sequoia sempervirens*, two of only two Latin words she knows, is just about the most spectacular tree ever to take root in Lamorindan soil.) Who could argue with a coast redwood?

... continued on page D4



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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	6	\$667,500	\$1,000,000
MORAGA	10	\$310,000	\$1,460,000
ORINDA	8	\$765,000	\$1,810,000

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

- 1003 Carol Lane, \$667,500, 5 Bdrms, 1785 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 10-31-14
- 1808 Del Rey Street, \$1,000,000, 3 Bdrms, 1716 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 11-12-14;
Previous Sale: \$517,000, 01-24-03
- 20 Huston Court, \$810,000, 5 Bdrms, 2567 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 11-5-14;
Previous Sale: \$540,000, 08-30-01
- 1509 Huston Road, \$755,500, 2 Bdrms, 1523 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 10-31-14;
Previous Sale: \$655,000, 06-28-04
- 952 Janet Lane, \$765,000, 3 Bdrms, 1827 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 11-6-14;
Previous Sale: \$43,000, 10-07-71
- 1050 Stuart Street, \$865,000, 2932 SqFt, 1942 YrBlt, 10-31-14;
Previous Sale: \$960,000, 10-31-06

MORAGA

- 1997 Ascot Drive #4, \$585,000, 3 Bdrms, 1728 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 10-31-14; P
Previous Sale: \$503,000, 05-21-09
- 1967 Ascot Drive #A, \$310,000, 2 Bdrms, 964 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 11-5-14

... continued on page D5



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Warmest Wishes from our house to yours!

We would like to thank the Lamorinda community for another amazing year, and look forward to being your preferred real estate brokerage for years to come. Wishing you and your loved ones great joy and many blessings this holiday season.

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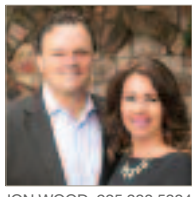
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Signature Trees Speak for Themselves

... continued from page D1



Erach Tarapore rakes his leaves on Michael Lane in Lafayette. He has taken care of his Modesto ash for more than 30 years.

“People think they’re evergreen, that they’re going to be low maintenance,” Olmstead says. “They’re like the ...” And he is obviously resisting using more Latin, so like the good people-person he is, he changes tack and goes back to English. “Redwoods are not low-maintenance,” he reports.

For one, redwoods shed their leaves, too. Sure, some people call them needles but they amount to the same thing. Trees have to be maintained. They can’t be planted somewhere under dubious soil circumstances and then fall down, say, and kill somebody. They can’t wiggle their roots into other people’s water pipes or sewage systems. People who plant trees have responsibilities, Olmstead says: They have to keep them healthy, clean up after them, and be responsible for them when they’re young, care for them as they mature. It begins to feel as if one is talking to a sex education counselor about responsible parenting.

So what do you plant if you want that magical effect?

“You start with how big,” he says, going back to the beginning, then he takes a big breath and his eyes almost start to well up. His passion for trees becomes obvious. “Deciduous trees are probably the best bet. You get everything with deciduous. Spectacular spring blossoms, bright green in the summer with shade, than fall color. You really can’t beat deciduous trees.”

Some people will plant collections, Olmstead explains. Like birches, in sets of three, “for faith, hope and charity.” And yes, he says, you have to rake the leaves. You have to watch out for the fruits that fall, which can be tedious to get rid of, especially when they’re knarly, like sycamores and others. Yes, you have to water it, preferably with a drip system that’s slow and deep off and on for a year or two – he will give you the amounts and times and everything else – and yes, they aren’t that pretty in the wintertime. But, he adds, “it’s winter.”

Still, the time comes to pay for the spectacular presentation of a nice tree. Erach



A beautiful oak on Burton Drive in Lafayette doesn't have to define a single house - it defines the whole neighborhood.

Photos Chris Lavin

Tapore of Michael Lane in Lafayette was found recently raking leaves quickly and dumping them into giant bags to get ready for an incoming storm. When asked why he bothered with a tree he had to care for, his face lit up: “This is a Modesto ash! They are beautiful trees, planted all along here,” he says, motioning up the lane. He has cared for his tree for more than 30 years, he says, and feels as if he has a relationship with it. He has it pruned every five to 10 years, and worries a bit about the mistletoe that’s taken hold high in its branches. He doesn’t mind doing the raking.

“I had to do it,” says Tarapore, holding his rake. “The tree will say, ‘I see you!’ And I know I have to do something. This is what I have to do today.”



Trees don't have to define the house. They also can provide swings with a needed branch.

Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

...continued from Page D2

MORAGA ... continued

- 113 Brookline Street, \$975,000, 3 Bdrms, 3424 SqFt, 1983 YrBlt, 10-31-14;
Previous Sale: \$850,000, 12-05-02
- 863 Camino Ricardo, \$1,250,000, 4 Bdrms, 2083 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 11-12-14;
Previous Sale: \$841,000, 10-08-04
- 67 Corte Yolanda, \$960,000, 3 Bdrms, 1894 SqFt, 1969 YrBlt, 11-13-14
- 1058 Larch Avenue, \$785,000, 2 Bdrms, 1232 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 11-4-14
- 18 Lynch Court, \$785,000, 3 Bdrms, 1656 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 11-14-14
- 651 Moraga Road #18, \$325,000, 2 Bdrms, 1144 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 11-12-14;
Previous Sale: \$36,500, 04-15-75
- 21 Williams Drive, \$1,460,000, 5 Bdrms, 2988 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 11-6-14;
Previous Sale: \$1,220,000, 08-31-04
- 431 Woodminster Drive, \$589,000, 3 Bdrms, 1800 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 11-13-14;
Previous Sale: \$269,000, 07-15-99

ORINDA

- 109 Bear Ridge Trail, \$1,810,000, 4 Bdrms, 3863 SqFt, 1988 YrBlt, 11-5-14
- 69 Coral Drive, \$1,245,000, 3 Bdrms, 1905 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 11-3-14;
Previous Sale: \$1,125,000, 10-24-06
- 5 Estates Drive, \$1,285,000, 4 Bdrms, 2630 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 11-6-14;
Previous Sale: \$1,250,000, 08-01-08
- 23 Hillcrest Drive, \$765,000, 3 Bdrms, 1290 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 10-31-14
- 20 Jack Tree Knoll, \$1,492,000, 11-10-14
- 35 La Cuesta Road, \$1,555,000, 3 Bdrms, 2468 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 11-12-14;
Previous Sale: \$1,076,000, 03-23-06
- 2 Loma Linda Court, \$1,200,000, 3 Bdrms, 2040 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 11-6-14;
Previous Sale: \$342,500, 05-17-91
- 31 Oakwood Road, \$1,250,000, 3 Bdrms, 2561 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 11-13-14;
Previous Sale: \$475,000, 06-27-97

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Stylish Solutions

Last Minute Holiday Décor Ideas

By Ann McDonald



We're nearing the holiday finish line. But just as we start to run through it, have you ever had this happen? You are feeling all warm and cozy and then your friend or spouse utters these words "we should..." followed by an off the cuff invitation to host a last minute get together at your home. No problem, you say. It all sounds fabulous when you have sugarplums in your head, but then you arrive home and realize you never quite pulled the holiday décor together.

Suddenly the tree is looking more Charlie Brown than Pottery Barn, the dining table is strewn with holiday cards and your kitchen/family room looks more like a shopping bag factory than an inviting space to host friends.

What to do? First, don't panic. You don't have to redecorate or spend \$5,000 with overnight shipping from a luxury holiday store to get ready inside of 72 hours.

Here are my top tricks to get you, the stylish suburbanite, on track fast.

1) DO: Think outside the box. Take a deep breath and remember, if you are headed out last minute for supplies, the traditional holiday product shelves may well be barren. A chipped Santa or painted wooden snowman is not exactly couture level decorating. Use the lack of choices to your advantage and stay true to your home's current color scheme. Purchase beautiful accessory items you can use all year with ease. Think sets of pretty glasses, pots or planters that match your home, silver anything.

2) DON'T: Reinvent the wheel. Remember, the reason we decorate our homes for the holiday season is to bless, not to impress. That means if we love something someone else has done and it blesses us with beauty, that is enough. At market a few months ago, I sourced topiaries that were stunning, expensive and made to order. For my own home, they were not practical financially or from a time standpoint. What did I do? I separated the elements as inspiration and created my own.

My team and I gathered planters and pots I already owned (we call it shed shopping), purchased faux boxwood balls with battery operated lights and went to the back yard to find striking oversized tree twigs which we used instead of antlers.



We used carpet squares with mirrors laid flat, shredded holiday cards, and a soft basket filled with the same type of shredding to hold the buffet silverware and a candle with glass hurricane.

Photos Couture Chateau





These displays we sourced for a client were out of budget range for me this season in my own home. To duplicate the type, I purchased faux boxwood balls with battery operated lights and then added dried twigs instead of the antlers and placed them in blue and white planters we use all year. Simple, elegant and very cost effective.



Happy Holidays!



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*Warmest wishes for a
Happy Holiday
and a Happy Healthy 2015.*



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Stylish Solutions

Last Minute Holiday Décor Ideas

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3) DO: Use items that work year round. One holiday vignette was created with an eye towards re-use once the season was over. Because we were on a tight budget, we headed straight for Ikea. First stop? The carpet section. I often use carpet squares or Ikat rugs as placemats and runners to achieve a luxury look for less on dining tables, entry hall consoles and even in overscale powder rooms with large counters. Every element is multi-purpose and non-holiday specific. It was a massive hit. Fresh, fast and talk about budget friendly.

When you are battling holiday overload and really do need to ready your spaces, give yourself permission to wander the aisles of stores you can escape in for inspiration. I will set aside up to 90 minutes, identify the need (holder for silverware) not the product (a silverware holder) and start to wander. For this project, the light bulb went off in the bathroom accessories area when we saw a pretty display holding towels. The soft baskets looked like chunky white sweaters. Very on trend. Because we identified the need, our mind was open to different solutions.

Here are a few of my favorite closing thoughts:

- * I prefer faux to real when purchasing boxwood and moss unless you have a large budget and are OK executing repairs.
- * The time honored wreath can be laid flat on a table to surround hurricane candles.
- * The dried tree branch is the best free staple around. I use them raw, embellish with glitter, spray paint and even bejewel them for clients. Place a dried tree branch in vase with playground sand for weight bearing. Make certain the vase won't crack from pressure. Hang simple ornaments from the branches. Uplight for drama.

Have a blessed holiday and I will see you in the New Year!

If you need help with your decorating project, visit <http://www.couturechateau.com> or give us a call at (925) 386-0720. Happy holidays and Happy New Year!



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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O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum

By Cynthia Brian

"Christmas trees come very close to exceeding nature." ~Andy Rooney



A modern Currier and Ives cozy Christmas living room. Photos Cynthia Brian

When my children were youngsters, cutting a tree was the big event of the season. We'd don our Santa hats, grab a bundle of rope to tie the tree to the top of the car, put film in the camera, and off we'd go, singing Christmas carols while plotting our adventure. It could take hours walking through a farm, checking out tree after tree, debating the merits of each. Sometimes we'd visit two or three farms before finding the perfect one. Afterwards, at home with our freshly cut treasure, we'd light a fire, drink hot cocoa and eggnog, eat persimmon pudding and Italian panetone, put on the Christmas music, and dance around the house as we spruced the fir with popcorn and cranberry strings, homemade ornaments, tinsel, and of course, plenty of twinkling lights.

One day my son had the bright idea that we should grow our own Christmas trees in order to have a never-ending supply of Yuletide enchantment. With the best planting season for evergreens between January and March, as soon as the small containers of conifers went on sale for \$1 post holiday, we nabbed 20 for our forthcoming

Christmas tree farm. We chose a prime spot at the top of our hill, prepared the plot, cleared the weeds, planted the seedlings, protected them with wire from marauding munchers, maintained soil moisture, and waited. The kids were very attentive to their trees. By year three, pruning and shaping the trees into conical forms began. Who knew that "Christmas trees" didn't automatically grow into perfect Christmas specimens? By year 7, they cut their first glorious imperfect tree and by year 13 all of the trunks were too large for any tree holder. Instead of cutting another tree, we potted a large Norfolk pine, added it to our entrance, where this oxygen producing, carbon dioxide absorber has served as our beloved *arbre de Noel*.

History, legend, or a combination of the two chronicles the tales of 16th century Germans bringing evergreens into their homes as holiday decor after Protestant reformer, Martin Luther, witnessed the stars sparkling through the forest trees and cut a tree to enjoy indoors. In 1848, Christmas trees are as significant to American culture as apple pie. But it wasn't until 1848 that Puritanical America embraced the idea of the "pagan" Christmas tree. The ever-popular Queen Victoria and her German Prince Albert were sketched with their children gathered around a decorated Christmas tree and East Coast society adopted this new fashionable trend. Currier and Ives jumped on the bucolic family festivity bandwagon by immortalizing vintage America in historic lithographs of cozy Christmas scenes including sleigh rides, crackling fires, candlelit chapels, snowmen, and tree decorating.

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Tagged and wired Christmas trees fill a garden center.



Decorating a winter garden as a Christmas wonderland.

Photos Cynthia Brian

O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum

... continued from page D9



Trees are wrapped in wire for transit, then added to stands at the lots.

Yet, the love of winter evergreens was celebrated long before the arrival of Christianity. In ancient Egypt, the sun god Ra was honored on the longest night of the year, Dec. 21, and the shortest day, Dec. 22 with palm frond decorations to symbolize life over death. The Romans marked the solstice with evergreen boughs in anticipation of a prosperous spring. The Druids used greens as symbols of eternal life while the Vikings believed that evergreens were the chosen trees of their sun god, Balder.

With the advent of electricity, Thomas Edison presented the possibility of twinkling tree lights without as much fire danger from branch-tied candles. Europeans preferred small trees of 4 feet; Americans sought plants that would reach the ceiling. Decorations in

the early days included strands of nuts, berries, apples, and popcorn. Today, a fortune can be spent on accessories and unique ornaments fit for a king from hand-carved Nativity scenes to hand-blown glass angels.

When to buy, cut, and trim the tree varies from country to country. Many American families get into the December spirit immediately following Thanksgiving while many Europeans wait until Christmas Eve to launch their rituals. Evergreen garlands, boughs, ivy, mistletoe, wreaths, poinsettias, and holly join the enticing kitchen aromas of gingerbread, marzipan, and hot mulled wine, making our Christmas castles merry and bright.

Grown in all 50 states, Christmas tree farming is big business, although it is mostly small farmers who do the growing, planting as many as 2,000 trees per acre. Seventy-seven million trees are planted annually as American consumers purchase approximately 30 million farm grown trees valued at more than \$1 billion. Fresh trees (to me the only way to play) outsell artificial trees three to one. Young families who are starting their own traditions often prefer to “cut their own” at a Christmas tree farm, enjoying a day in search of the perfect tannenbaum, as our family did in years past.

As you banish the blues with the greens of a pine, fir, spruce, redwood, cedar, or cypress, you'll be rewarded with the fresh fragrance of the wild woods. Remember to keep your cut tree watered as most farmed trees are chopped down in October or early November, then trucked to the retailer. While they won't dry out outdoors, once indoors, your specimen will need a quart to a gallon of water per day depending on the size.

This year, whether your tree was grown on a plantation or in your backyard, bring the botanical brilliance of a live tree into your seasonal festivities and celebrate the magic.

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WINTER TIPS

Cleaning and thinning your trees may reduce the potential storm hazards without compromising the shade. In some situations the risk of failure cannot be reduced without removal of branches. Remember that healthy structurally sound trees are generally wind fast even when mature.

Storm damage is usually, but not always, related to structural problems that could have been addressed with proper structural training when the tree was young. Co dominant (two trunks with a narrow angle of attachment) trunks account for many trees failures. The hazard of wind damage is higher on the regrowth of trees that have been “topped”.

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Cynthia Brian's Mid-Month Reminders

COOK with either fresh or dried herbs. You'll need more when you use fresh. Dried are more potent. For every tablespoon of fresh herbs in a recipe, substitute 1 teaspoon of dried.

CREATE a stunning DIY holiday table arrangement using a combination of ornamental cabbage, lilies, evergreen branches, white roses, and pinecones.

LOOKING for a last minute gift that will be unique and useful? Check out your local garden retailers for holiday ideas, including a pot of drought resistant kalanchoe or a Christmas cactus in bloom.

TRIM low hanging branches of redwoods, pines, firs, and other evergreens to use in wreaths, garlands, and holiday ornamentation.

CARE for your land and your land will care of you. Our good earth is Mother Nature's Christmas gift to us.

Happy gardening, happy growing, fa la la la!



Christmas cactus begins to bloom.



Cynthia Brian and her favorite ladies under the tree.

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\$4,250/month



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
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
65 Hillcrest Drive Exquisitely rebuilt California Rancher in heart of Glorietta. Turn Key quality, Anderson windows & doors, maple hardwood floors, state of the art kitchen. Near great schools, town, BART & freeway.
\$1,475,000



ORINDA
207 Camino Sobrante Contemporary 3927sf 5bd/4ba built in 1987 w/large level front yd & level back yd surrounded by trees just steps from OCC & Lake Cascade. 2 master suites, large family rm & great rm, hwdw flrs.
\$1,795,000



ORINDA
500 Dalewood Drive Beautiful home ideal for in-law & family living. 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.
\$1,795,000



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
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



MORAGA
267 Paseo Bernal Back on the Market with a new contemporary look. Recently updated 3bd/2.5ba with new carpet & new paint color. Lovely private patio, lots of storage and conveniently located.
\$725,000



LAFAYETTE
1142 Glen Road Stunning NEW single level 5bd/4.5ba 4510 sq. ft. traditional on flat .79 acre lot in popular Happy Valley Glen. Exquisite millwork, chef's kitchen. Walk to downtown Lafayette & BART. Top schools.
\$3,495,000



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



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

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