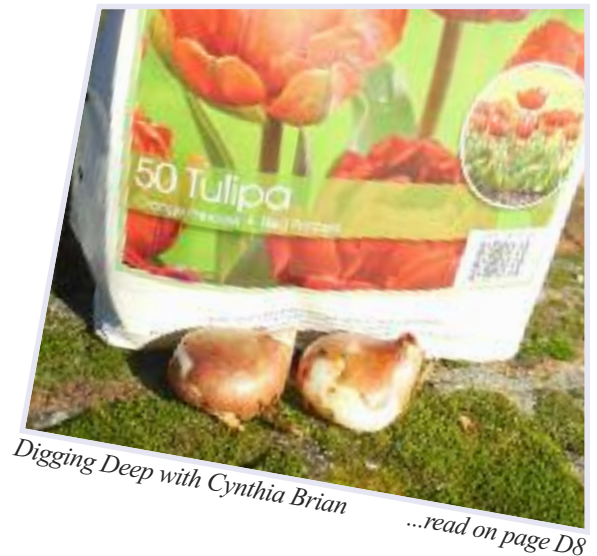


# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 08 Issue 23 Wednesday, January 14, 2015



*Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian*

*...read on page D8*

*Stylish Solutions*

## The Intrinsic Nature of Deep Cleaning and Design

By Ann McDonald



*This month, I have included photos from my own home so you can see where I walk the walk, not just talk the talk. This is one of my favorite angles to take photos of our kitchen. Why? Because it speaks truth about my dish cupboards. Seasonally I rotate collections but those can accumulate quickly. When I need an honest assessment of my mess, I snap this shot and take the truth pill. If it's bad, I dive in and reduce big time.*

*Photo Peter Medilek*

Many design clients have dreams of spring remodels, home updates and fresh flowers in completely re-designed guest suites and home offices, but the first thing we must address is the deep clean.

Think of it as an accounting of your home interior.

We have a saying in our office: "Blessing comes when it has a space to reside." The same is true of new furniture and interior decorating and design. We must create space for it within our homes before it can come live with us.

Without space for new things to inhabit, they get piled onto old proverbial wine skins and before you know it your gorgeous home is brimming with old and new items that don't quite work together. Let's take this January to really address simple tips and execute simple diligence so we can refresh our homes and refresh our families at the same time. ... continued on page D4





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## Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	6	\$820,000	\$4,000,000
MORAGA	5	\$260,000	\$2,050,000
ORINDA	7	\$750,000	\$1,380,000

Home sales are compiled by CalREsource, 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 CalREsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

### LAFAYETTE

3494 Black Hawk Road, \$4,000,000, 5 Bdrms, 3644 SqFt, 1951 YrBl, 11-21-14

414 Castello Road, \$975,000, 3 Bdrms, 1330 SqFt, 1954 YrBl, 11-25-14;

Previous Sale: \$620,000, 07-27-10

1117 Rahara Drive, \$1,254,000, 3 Bdrms, 2153 SqFt, 1953 YrBl, 11-21-14

2094 Reliez Valley Road, \$1,500,000, 4 Bdrms, 3454 SqFt, 1960 YrBl, 11-25-14;

Previous Sale: \$1,350,000, 03-27-13

3449 Stage Coach Drive, \$1,910,000, 4 Bdrms, 3766 SqFt, 1989 YrBl, 11-21-14;

Previous Sale: \$1,310,000, 03-29-02

680 Wee Donegal, \$820,000, 3 Bdrms, 1836 SqFt, 1967 YrBl, 11-26-14;

Previous Sale: \$320,000, 06-23-94

### MORAGA

2067 Ascot Drive #144, \$260,000, 1 Bdrms, 753 SqFt, 1971 YrBl, 11-25-14

1 Josefa Place, \$600,000, 2 Bdrms, 1211 SqFt, 1984 YrBl, 11-26-14;

Previous Sale: \$525,000, 07-07-05

1128 Larch Avenue, \$1,015,000, 3 Bdrms, 2053 SqFt, 1965 YrBl, 11-25-14;

Previous Sale: \$970,000, 11-04-05

146 Tharp Drive, \$1,075,000, 4 Bdrms, 2101 SqFt, 1963 YrBl, 11-21-14;

Previous Sale: \$456,000, 05-19-94

2 Willow Springs Court, \$2,050,000, 4 Bdrms, 3910 SqFt, 1989 YrBl, 11-26-14;

Previous Sale: \$2,050,000, 06-15-06

### ORINDA

164 Ardith Drive, \$1,080,000, 4 Bdrms, 1806 SqFt, 1959 YrBl, 11-24-14

7 Candlestick Road, \$1,380,000, 4 Bdrms, 2261 SqFt, 1978 YrBl, 11-21-14

2 Carisbrook Drive, \$750,000, 3 Bdrms, 2389 SqFt, 1959 YrBl, 11-25-14

19 Culver Court, \$815,000, 3 Bdrms, 1525 SqFt, 1949 YrBl, 11-25-14

55 Hazel Tree Ridge, \$1,040,000, 11-21-14

150 La Espiral, \$780,000, 4 Bdrms, 2139 SqFt, 1942 YrBl, 11-26-14

10 St. Stephens Drive, \$880,000, 4 Bdrms, 1940 SqFt, 1955 YrBl, 11-21-14;

Previous Sale: \$299,000, 11-15-88

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## What to expect in 2015

By Andi Peterson Brown

The 2014 Lamorinda real estate market remained strong as the Bay Area economy continued to thrive, bringing us a steady stream of well-capitalized buyers. Sold inventory for the year remained almost identical to 2013: 276 homes sold in Orinda (264 in 2013), 301 in Lafayette (315 in 2013), and 150 in Moraga (140 in 2013), while the average sales price increased in all three cities. As compared to 2013, Orinda's average sales price increased 11% to \$1.375M, Lafayette's increased 8% to \$1.35M, and Moraga's increased 6% to \$1.205M. As the market emerges from its annual winter hibernation and we gear up for the 2015 spring selling season, we expect to see:

- **A competitive spring market.** Buyers should anticipate a competitive spring market, but industry experts expect more sellers to come to market in 2015, helping to ease our inventory shortage. Values are anticipated to continue their rise, but at a more moderate pace.
- **Relatively steady interest rates.** Interest rates remain historically low and are expected to remain so for some time. Industry economists are forecasting, though, that they could inch up to 5% before the year is over.

In addition, I'm happy to talk in more detail about the market if you have further questions.



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## Stylish Solutions

# The Intrinsic Nature of Deep Cleaning and Design

... continued from page D1



*We have two French Ranges that are not self-cleaning. As such, a professional deep clean is critical from a maintenance standpoint. Take a good look at your appliances, inside and out, front and back as well as ceilings, light fixtures and floors. Hire professionals when you can. Photos Eric Nelder*

How do we do that? Here are my top three successful January cleanout tips for you, the stylish suburbanite:

**First: Deep Clean.** Even if you have never hired a cleaning service, there are times it's prudent to call in the professionals. At least three times a year, we recommend a deep clean for each of our clients. That includes things like: skylights, stone floors, heating vents, interior ceilings, drapery and upholstery. There are so many services that specialize; find the ones with solid reviews that use eco-friendly products and invest. And look up. Don't neglect the oversized chandelier and ceilings. They need to be washed.

Many people hold off until the so-called spring months

(March and April) to do what they call a "spring clean," but we have found getting a solid crew in for a deep clean in January not only clears the glitter off the hardwood floor (hello, holiday leftovers), it sets our clients in a refreshing place even while the weather can be gloomy.

Personally, we have stone floors and the glitter (which I love in December) gets a tad tiresome in late January. After a solid vacuum by me, it's time to call in the stone polishers and sealers. Expensive? Perhaps, but definitely worth it. Besides, a bit of maintenance along the way saves the investment down the road.

**Second: Reduce, reduce, reduce.** Did I say reduce? I meant, reduce! We tackle our waistslines and even our winter gardens in January but often forget to look hard inside our homes. Personally, I succumb to January sales just like the rest and, as a decorator, I am often purchasing for inventory later in the season, but some of those things work their way into my personal space. Not good, Ann.

How do I recommend tackling this reduction? Simple: make a chart and get aggressive. Take inventory and target to reduce by 25 percent. That means when you are cleaning out a kitchen storage area, if you have 10 measuring cups, lose two or three – more if you can. Ten pans? Lose two or three.

The truth is, when we really face our truth behind the storage doors in the kitchen and on the book shelves in the family room, there is always room for reduction. Donate, garage sale, recycle.

Even the pros know: it's nearly impossible for someone to get a clear vision for a space in their mind's eye without clearing the clutter first. ... continued on page D6



*Close-up shots reveal how clean items really are.*

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1408 Meadowlark Court - 18 Monte Vista Road - 176 Lombardy Lane - 50 San Pablo Court - 112 Amber Valley Lane  
26 St. Stephens Drive - 21 Greenwood Court - 1106 Upper Happy Valley Road - 8 Southard Court - 35 La Cuesta Road  
67 Ardilla Road 16 Fenway Court - 17 Tappan Lane - 1879 Joseph Drive - 484 Dalewood Drive - 945 Mountain View Drive  
37 Sleepy Hollow Lane - 7 La Encinal - 641 Cross Ridge Court - 2 Los Altos Road - 18 Charles Hill Road - 18 Mira Loma Road  
1229 Rose Lane - 14 Silverwood Court - 25 Monte Vista Road - 3 Canyon View Road - 5 Valley View Lane - 45 Don Gabriel Way  
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## Stylish Solutions

### The Intrinsic Nature of Deep Cleaning and Design

... continued from page D4

It might be time to donate or toss that afghan with snags from your pet and one too many coffee stains (am I speaking to myself? perhaps), and purchase a new one that won't snag and will bleach in the wash.

It's funny, we do this with our wardrobes consistently, but we fail to remember it is just as critical with our homes, perhaps more so as our spaces nurture and create just by virtue of being space.

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Do your countertops need refinishing? I have brass straps on butcher block and call in marine-grade finishers to keep them in ship shape. Photo Peter Medilek

**Third: Take Photos, Look Objectively, Document Progress for Encouragement.** We tell our clients to take photos of each room in their home this time of year. Why? Because you'll see the space more clearly once you take a solid photo of a space, let it alone for a few days, clear your head, and by extension, your visual palate and come back to the photos a day or two later.

Set aside some time to address each photo and room. What are your goals for those spaces this year? Will 2015 be a year of guests? Then let's budget and plan for a refresh in that guest room. Will 2015 see an elderly parent or post-college child move home? Then let's budget and plan for that. What about the possible remodel or addition? Photos help tremendously. They simply don't lie.

When we sit down and work through what is really going on in a space, we can identify what needs to change.

Here's to a happy, healthy and tidy 2015 where our homes have space for blessings to reside. If you are interested in joining one of our upcoming design workshops, please email [ann@couturechateau.com](mailto:ann@couturechateau.com) or call (925) 386-0720.

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Ann McDonald, IIDA, NAPO, is the Founder/CEO of Couture Chateau, a luxury interior design firm in Orinda. For a complete blog post including other design ideas, visit [www.couturechateau.com/blog](http://www.couturechateau.com/blog)





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# Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

## Why We Garden! Part 1

By Cynthia Brian

*"In all things of nature there is something of the marvelous." –Aristotle*

In the blustery cold of post holiday days, I found myself wandering my landscape bundled against the chill in a warm down jacket, faux fur hood, and two pairs of gloves. The winds were intense. Tree limbs littered the driveway as entire branches arched toward the ground. The gale reddened my eyes, and although nothing in the garden demanded my immediate attention, I was determined to work outside.

In the midst of the storm, I asked myself, "Why do I love gardening so much?" As I raked the rubble, and pulled the errant weeds, a river of answers flooded my brain. After asking friends, family, and strangers the same question, it became obvious that although we all have our individual reasons, gardening gets into our blood and contributes to our unique personalities, passions, and preferences.

Here are reasons we choose to be gardeners:

### Part 1

#### Memories

Since I grew up on a 360-acre farm where we grew a great variety of organic fruits, vegetables, and herbs as well as a couple of acres of flowers, my fondest memories all have something to do with being in the dirt. I'll never forget the winter when my mom caught me picking her prized camellias. As she shouted and scolded, my devoted dog jumped between us growling at her. I learned the lesson that it was not okay to pluck flowers in any garden without permission, even if the bouquet I was picking was for my mother. She learned that our dog protected the kids first, even from our parents. Raising my own children, I wanted to give them opportunities



*A fern gets a shower and shake in the sink.*



*Bare-root roses are now available in nurseries and garden centers.*

that would trigger remembrances, whether it was harvesting the first beans, or burying a beloved pet. I still think about collecting blackberries for summer breakfasts at my grandparents' horse barn, learning to drive the jalopy in the orchard, and saving hollyhock seeds at Nonie's. A lifetime of fond memories grows in the garden.

#### Food

Growing your own food is the healthiest way to live. There is nothing better than eating a fresh, ripe tomato right off the vine. Oranges, grapes, apples, tangerines, cherries ... everything is sweeter and tastier when you grow it yourself. We amend our soil so we know our harvests provide nutrients and health benefits from ground to table. By learning what grows well in each season, a gardener has a yearlong produce department right outside the door.

... continued on page D10



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# Why We Garden! Part 1

... continued from page D8

## Exercise

Extended sitting has become the killer disease du jour. Gardeners get off the couch, unplug from the computer, and move outside in the fresh air. Digging, raking, hauling, lifting, planting, mowing, and hoeing burns calories. In fact, one hour of weeding burns approximately 300 calories for women and 400 for men, which is the same amount as moderate walking or cycling. Forty-five minutes of gardening equals 30 minutes of aerobics. Carrying buckets of stones, bricks, or water strengthens our muscles. We are cross training at every age.

## Beauty

Gardeners are artists. Plants are the paint and our grounds are the canvas. Our unique creative styles offer solace to the senses. There is wonder and magic in the natural world and gardeners express themselves to surprise and delight. Many Lamorindans own second homes in the Sierras. The beauty of their snow-laden winter wonderland rivals the burst of May flora after the melt. The first signs of crocus and daffodils in January lift spirits while the perfume of roses and bright hues of summer perennials remind us that the outdoors are for entertaining.

## Pride

How exciting it is to grow a spectacular peach or a beautiful dinner plate dahlia! We feel a sense of accomplishment, of a job well done, something tangible that we

manifested through our personalized manual labor. Being in the age of technology and big business, many of us don't use the motor skills in our work life that we use in the garden. We are proud of our calloused hands and muddy boots.

## Connections

Not only do we feel a soulful connection with our Mother Earth, but we gain a better understanding of ourselves and of others. No matter what level we are in our gardening adventure, we connect and communicate with one another about our trials, triumphs, and hurdles. Many join garden clubs or become members of a community garden. Our social circles expand over the latest recipe we cooked with ingredients from our potagers.

## Sharing

A garden is to share. It is such a joy to bring a basket of extra corn, Swiss chard, or plums to a neighbor or friend. Gardeners distribute rose canes after January pruning, bouquets of flowers as hostess gifts, and volunteer plants that have been pulled for transplanting. We share our knowledge of what works and what doesn't work, short cuts we have found, and specimens that flourish in our area. We collect and dry seeds to give to those who could benefit. Without all of the slips, pinches, cuttings, and rootings from my mother's garden, I wouldn't have my heritage showcase. If you've ever attended one of my garden presentations or seminars, you have benefited from the plethora of seeds, herbs, fruits, and other goodies I give away. Sharing is integral to a gardener's life.

There are so many reasons that we love to garden – rain, sleet, snow, or sunshine – that we'll continue this conversation in next month's Digging Deep. I'd love you to email me your main motives for being a gardener. Email me at [Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com](mailto:Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com). I'll do my best to incorporate the many ways we make this world a more beautiful place by doing what we love. Make a New Year's resolution to find the marvelous in nature.

Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!



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## IT'S TIME TO PRUNE YOUR PINE TREES

With current winter drought conditions home owners need to make sure to water their trees too. Lack of water brings bugs and diseases. Proper pruning is also essential this time of year for your Pine trees. Bark Beetles can infest your tree when it is weak from lack of water or due to sap that comes from pruning in the spring and summer; these beetles are dormant during the fall and winter months. Beetles also can carry diseases from tree to tree, and the only way to stop them is to prevent them by having a healthy tree in the first place.

So don't wait until it's too late have a complete inspection by a Certified Arborist at Advance Tree Service





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*Fresh picked carrots sprinkled with basil are ready to roast.*



*The final crop of persimmons sits on the chopping block with fresh greens and Meyer lemons.*

## Cynthia Brian's Mid-Month Reminders

- **ADD** better drainage to any potted plants you received as holiday gifts by removing the wrapping paper. Trim the spent blossoms, water deeply, and fertilize.
- **BRING** budding cymbidium orchids indoors to display.
- **PRUNE** all roses, crepe myrtles, and deciduous fruit trees by the end of the month.
- **BUY** bare-root rose bushes. Soak in water for a day before planting. Cut off any damaged or broken roots. Plant the bud union three inches above the ground.
- **TREAT** houseplants to a warm shower and shake. Indoor heat dries the roots, leaves, and fronds, especially those of ferns.
- **PICK** ripe and tangy naval oranges, Meyer lemons, tangelos and use the rest of your persimmons.
- **PERUSE** seed catalogues that are available now to determine what you want to plant in spring.



Cynthia Brian wears a hood for gardening in the cold.

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Cynthia Brian

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In 2014, we helped welcome more than 200 new families to the neighborhood. Home buyers and sellers throughout Contra Costa County have turned to the team at Village Associates in growing numbers to help navigate the often turbulent waters of the local housing market. As LaMorinda's leading and most trusted Real Estate firm for each of the past 14 years, we thank them for their overwhelming support.

Best wishes to our families, friends and neighbors for a happy, healthy and safe 2015.



#### Your Village Associates:

*Front Row (l-r):* Caitlin O'Laskey, Marianne Greene, Patricia Battersby, Sue Olsen, Joan Eggers, Ann Ward, Linda Ehrich, Anne Knight, Lynda Snell, Joan Cleveland, Sue Layng, Margaret Zucker

*Second Row (l-r):* Christine Clark, Ben Olsen, Art Lehman, Joan Evans, Amy Rose Smith, Karen Murphy, April Matthews, Jaime Roder, Angie Evans Traxinger, Carol Stevenson

*Back Row (l-r):* Dexter Honens II, Ignacio Vega, Altie Schmitt, Clark Thompson, Molly Smith, Dan Weil, Terri Bates Walker, Charles Levine, Erin Martin, Tara Rochlin, Shannon Conner, Judy Schoenrock, Linda Friedman

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