

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 10 Issue 10 Wednesday, July 13, 2016



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

...read on page D12

Uncovering the Pros and Cons of Pool Covers

By Cathy Tyson



A pool alarm helps with safety.

Photo Vickie Martin

When the mercury rises, families are ready to dive into a community or backyard pool, but how to keep pools safe and warm is an ongoing concern for homeowners with pools. While pool covers provide a level of safety and can reduce heating costs, depending on the type, they can be frustrating to take on and off.

Before installing a cover, a Moraga couple reports that their regular pool temperature was about 64 degrees, a little chilly for a quick dip. Since adding a cover in May, the average pool temperature is up to 76 degrees, and more efficiently heated up to 80 degrees with assistance from a gas heating system. The happy homeowners credit the use of a cover roller suggested by their neighbor, which easily opens and closes, in keeping the pool consistently warmer and encourages more summertime enjoyment.

A number of pool cover options are on the market, and of course each has pros and cons. One aspect that many pool owners consider is safety.

“The first line of defense is always supervision” said Paul Barendregt of Very Nice Pools in Lafayette, who has been in business for over 35 years, regarding potential drowning accidents. However in addition to vigilance, pool owners can consider automatic covers, safety alarm buoys, nets and fences for peace of mind and for a more inviting swim.

It’s important to note that drowning takes the lives of more California toddlers than any other kind of accident, according to the California Department of Public Health, and children who manage to survive a near drowning often suffer permanent brain damage.

When Jeanine and Jim McDermott moved into their Moraga home when their daughter was just six months old, installing a pool cover was the first thing they did. Fast forward approximately 10 years and after repairing it twice, they had it removed. Because their pool was kidney shaped, the tracks were on the decking and “it drove us crazy,” says Jeanine McDermott. When it rained, it also created another pool on top of the pool, a hassle to address. The now empty-nesters still use the pool and backyard all the time, as they consider it an extension of their house, but prefer to go coverless. ... continued on page D4

Nancy Stryker



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CAPE COD IN HEART OF SLEEPY HOLLOW



This charming single-story Cape Cod home is located in Orinda's coveted Sleepy Hollow neighborhood and is filled with architectural detailing from shingle siding, cottage-style shutters and whitewashed fence to detailed woodwork in its crisp, light-filled rooms that connect with the inviting outdoor spaces. The sprawling half-acre property, with approximately 2,513 sq. ft., four bedrooms, three and a half bathrooms, enjoys spacious patios, solar-heated pool and spa and ample entertainment and play space.

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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	11	\$950,000	\$2,645,000
MORAGA	3	\$650,000	\$2,125,000
ORINDA	8	\$873,000	\$2,425,000

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 Cal REsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

LAFAYETTE

- 3164 Cordova Way, \$1,150,000, 3 Bdrms, 1840 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 6-9-16; Previous Sale: \$699,000, 06-24-11
- 3111 Diablo View Road, \$1,293,500, 5 Bdrms, 3939 SqFt, 1972 YrBlt, 6-10-16; Previous Sale: \$929,000, 02-11-04
- 915 Janet Lane, \$950,000, 3 Bdrms, 1588 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 6-10-16
- 3910 Leroy Way, \$1,265,000, 3 Bdrms, 1427 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 6-6-16
- 1242 Panorama Drive, \$2,645,000, 4 Bdrms, 3717 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 6-7-16; Previous Sale: \$450,000, 08-14-92
- 934 Raintree Place, \$1,550,000, 4 Bdrms, 2715 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 6-10-16; Previous Sale: \$951,000, 08-30-02
- 927 Reliez Station Road, \$1,010,000, 2 Bdrms, 1437 SqFt, 1946 YrBlt, 6-6-16; Previous Sale: \$530,000, 02-03-12
- 576 Silverado Drive, \$1,550,000, 3 Bdrms, 1414 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 6-6-16; Previous Sale: \$1,350,000, 01-07-14
- 3461 Stage Coach Drive, \$1,991,500, 5 Bdrms, 3710 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 6-10-16; Previous Sale: \$560,000, 09-27-88
- 3957 Woodside Court, \$1,423,000, 5 Bdrms, 2446 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 6-10-16; Previous Sale: \$225,000, 01-29-85
- 3411 Woodview Drive, \$975,000, 3 Bdrms, 1762 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 6-7-16; Previous Sale: \$439,000, 12-11-01

MORAGA

- 395 Fernwood Drive, \$1,482,500, 4 Bdrms, 2824 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 6-9-16; Previous Sale: \$68,500, 09-17-71
- 175 Miramonte Drive, \$650,000, 2 Bdrms, 1525 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 6-9-16
- 2159 Sky View Court, \$2,125,000, 4 Bdrms, 4916 SqFt, 1997 YrBlt, 6-9-16; Previous Sale: \$950,000, 08-06-98

ORINDA

- 71 Ardilla Road, \$1,180,000, 3 Bdrms, 1852 SqFt, 1923 YrBlt, 6-9-16; Previous Sale: \$750,000, 06-29-12
- 111 Ardith Drive, \$1,450,000, 4 Bdrms, 2227 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 6-6-16
- 37 Camino Don Miguel, \$1,375,000, 3 Bdrms, 2172 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 6-9-16; Previous Sale: \$749,000, 06-24-99
- 112 Crestview Drive, \$873,000, 3 Bdrms, 2439 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 6-8-16; Previous Sale: \$1,200,000, 08-15-05
- 19 Glorietta Court, \$905,000, 3 Bdrms, 1516 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt, 6-6-16
- 8 La Plaza Drive, \$1,590,000, 3 Bdrms, 2789 SqFt, 1939 YrBlt, 6-6-16
- 213 Overhill Road, \$1,787,000, 4 Bdrms, 2348 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 6-9-16; Previous Sale: \$976,000, 06-08-05
- 48 Rheem Boulevard, \$2,425,000, 5 Bdrms, 3688 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 6-6-16; Previous Sale: \$950,000, 05-17-11

Upper Happy Valley Estate



1005 Timothy Lane, Lafayette | Offered at \$2,495,000

- 5 Bedrooms, 4 Bathrooms
- 4868± square feet
- 1.02± landscaped lot with pool
- Prime close-in location

Charming Lafayette Rancher



3370 Sweet Drive, Lafayette | Offered at \$889,000

- Charming cottage on flat .32± acre lot
- One of the most desirable locations
- Endless expansion possibilities
- Once in a life-time opportunity

Sought after Lafayette Trail | Coming Soon



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- One of the most desirable locations
- Endless expansion possibilities
- Once in a life-time opportunity

Perfection in South Orinda | Pending



261 Ivy Place, Orinda | Offered at \$1,395,000

- 4 Bedrooms, 2 Bathrooms, 2130± square feet
- Prime Court Location
- Beautifully updated and enhanced property
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Kurt Piper



Christine Gallegos



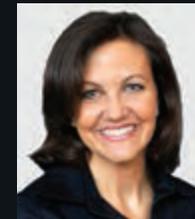
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Uncovering the Pros and Cons of Pool Covers

... continued from page D1

They have a pool service that comes regularly to adjust the chemicals and keep the pool clean.

In Lafayette, Vickie and Jeff Martin have a lovely pool, no small children living at home, but two pugs who are not good swimmers, due to their short legs and barrel-shaped bodies. After a recent pool remodel, they opted not to get a pool cover and instead purchased a safety buoy that is designed to float in the pool and detect when something 18 pounds or more falls into the pool. It comes with a house remote receiver that works up to 200 feet away. On a recent day however, the buoy was loudly beeping for no apparent reason. Sonny the pug was also sounding an alarm by barking at the beeping buoy.

There are similar alarms that attach to the edge of the pool that have an underwater sensor which will trigger an alarm on a remote receiver in the house when an object 18 pounds or more falls into the water. This may not be the best option for families with cats or very small dogs, and doesn't address evaporation or heat loss.

On the upper end of the price spectrum are convenient motorized pool covers that are very safe, keep the heat in and the leaves and debris out. But these can run in the \$9,000 to \$10,000 range. With a new pool installation, these can easily be included in the design, so the tracks are underneath the lip of the pool. It's also possible to retrofit an existing rectangular pool, with the tracks are on top of the pool decking.

All summer long, scores of swim team kids as well as adults are using the recently remodeled pool at the Moraga Country Club. Aquatic Director Sean Mason, reports they have tried an enzyme barrier cover, but due to the lane ropes and windy conditions, it had "limited" success. This type of cover works best on indoor pools, said Mason. Unfortunately there was no room for big bulky cover storage reels in the new design,

so the pool goes uncovered, but there is a large, secure fence around the exterior of the pool area.

Manual covers can cost under \$100 and block dirt and leaves from a pool, transmit the heat from the sun to the water, and prevent evaporation. However it can be aggravating getting it on and off. Some homeowners use this type of cover in the winter months, when it's likely the pool won't be used much.

Mesh covers are attached to the pool deck using anchors with stainless steel springs, which provide protection from the elements, debris, as well as accidental drowning or entrapment of loved ones and pets. Similarly, but less solid, net covers attach with anchors around the perimeter of the pool – there are no heat or evaporations savings with these, but they do offer a barrier that is tight enough that if someone accidentally takes a tumble into the pool, they won't drown.

A jackhammer is another alternative. In the 1960s and 1970s as Lamorinda suburbs were sprouting, with no thought of drought, developers were busy installing pools into smallish backyards. As those houses eventually turned over, a number of homeowners opted to simply fill in the pool and landscape over the top, adding to their usable backyard space. For those with vintage pools and pool equipment, this is a much more economical choice than taking on an expensive remodel that will likely include new plaster, tile and coping, not to mention a new heater and plumbing.

California's Health and Safety Code requires private pools built or remodeled after 1998 feature at least one of seven safety devices. The list includes a fence, approved pool cover, an alarm on each house door that accesses the pool or a pool-use alarm that alerts the homeowner when someone enters the water.

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Lack of Supply Affects Home Sales

By Conrad Bassett, CRP, GMS-T

The second quarter of 2016 had some moderation with a decrease in closed sale activity on the residential side of Lamorinda real estate, with supply continuing to be low, pending sales down slightly and with the average sales price remaining high in Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda.

The decrease in sales can be attributed to the lack of supply. Here are statistics from the Contra Costa Association of Realtors for April 1 through June 30:

Lafayette

Homes Closed Q2 2016	Sale Prices	Ave. Price:	Ave. Days on Market
2016: 89 single family homes	\$825,000 to \$3,700,000	\$1,548,262	19
2015: 128		\$1,670,209	19
2014: N/A		\$1,396,941	19

The lower average price this year is likely a function of the smaller sample and more lower priced homes selling. Previous second quarter averages were \$1,226,216 for 2013 and 2012 when it was \$1,053,173.

Moraga

Homes Closed Q2 2016	Sale Prices	Ave. Price:	Ave. Days on Market
2016: 42	\$775,000 to \$2,125,000	\$1,316,655	31
2015: 40		\$1,368,425	13
2014: 43		\$1,301,236	17

The average prices are up from \$1,144,668 in 2013 and from \$983,785 in 2012. The average marketing time was up too. It was 17 days in the second quarter of 2014 and it was 18 days in the same period in 2013.

Orinda

Homes Closed Q2 2016	Sale Prices	Ave. Price:	Ave. Days on Market
2016: 74	\$758,000 to \$4,650,000	\$1,584,174	15
2015: 86		\$1,532,761	19
2014: 80		\$1,434,930	23

In the quarter ending June 30, on an average price per square foot basis, Lafayette detached single-family homes sold at \$598 per square foot, a slight rise from the \$594 a year ago. It was \$537 per square foot in the second quarter of 2014 and \$495 per square foot in that same time in 2013. Moraga homes sold for \$566 and Orinda was at \$600.49. In 2015, in the same calendar quarter, these amounts were \$538 and \$558 respectively.

In Lafayette, the average sales price was 102.7 percent of the final asking price. In Moraga it was 102.8 percent and in Orinda it was 103.2 percent.

In the condominium/townhome category, Lafayette had two resale closings at \$525,000 and \$590,000, Moraga had 24 ranging from \$359,950 to \$1,085,000 and Orinda had none.

As of July 8, there were 71 homes under contract in the MLS in the three communities combined with asking prices of \$435,000 to \$3.6 million. A year ago there were 85 homes under contract per the MLS in the three communities combined with asking prices of \$239,000 to \$6.5 million. It should be pointed out that there are no "potential short sales" that are currently pending and subject to lender approval. At this same time a year ago there was one. There are no pending REO (bank owned) sales.

This is due to property values continuing to increase versus three years ago and many of those sellers are no longer "under water" or have been able to refinance their homes and are no longer at the point of foreclosure.

Inventory, however, remains low. There are 107 properties on the market and a year ago there were 110 available properties in the three communities combined. Two years ago there were 126. This is quite a change from July, 2011 when the inventory was at 219 homes.

There are only 44 properties on the market in Lafayette — about the same as the 49 at this same time a year ago. Asking prices in Lafayette currently range from \$659,000 to \$5.6 million. In Moraga, buyers have their choice of only 18 homes or condominiums listed between \$649,000 and \$3.3 million. A year ago at this time there were 21.

In Orinda there are 45, about the same as the 40 on the market at the same time a year ago. The list price range from \$899,500 to \$22.5 million.

There are no bank-owned or short sales currently in the MLS available in any of the three communities.

At the high end, 25 homes sold above \$2 million in the three communities combined. A year ago there were 42. There are 47 currently available above this amount in the three communities combined.

Interest rates continue to be at very attractive levels and many corporations have expanded their businesses and continue to relocate families both into and out of the area.

Lastly, it is important to look at what homes are selling for versus their list prices. Often homes come on the market at unrealistic prices, and they do not sell, but in the second quarter of this year many homes have had multiple offers and have sold at or above the list price.

We are also seeing many buyers having to make offers without the traditional contingencies of obtaining financing or having a home appraisal or even having the home inspected. Many sellers are now opting to obtain pre-sale inspections in order to understand the condition of their homes and to also prevent a buyer from trying to renegotiate a lower price or repairs.

Of the 89 single family sales that closed in Lafayette in the second quarter of 2015, 61 sold at or above the final list price.

In Moraga, 28 of the 42 sales were at or above the asking price and in Orinda, 58 of the 74 sold at or above the final listing price.



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Orinda



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Make a Smart Move



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Digging Deep

Warm or Cool, Summer Gardening is a Breeze

By Cynthia Brian

"There shall be eternal summer in the grateful heart." — Celia Thaxter*Who can resist a summery arrangement of sunflowers and hydrangeas?**Photos Cynthia Brian*

When it's sweltering outside, I want to be in the garden. I find it challenging to sit in my office writing articles or producing radio shows when nature beckons me to be nurturing the earth.

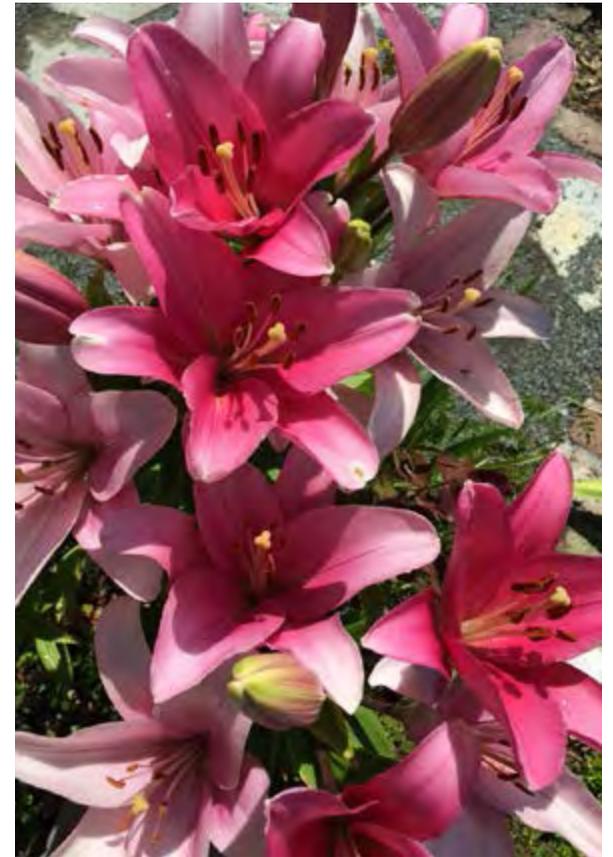
In summer I spend several hours of every single day digging in the dirt whether it's early in the morning or after dusk because my chores are never finished. Like the gardening wardrobes of my siblings, mine usually consists of my bathing suit and shorts allowing me a quick cool down with a spray from the garden hose. As my daughter was working in her garden in her bikini she telephoned to declare that she was carrying on our family tradition. "I realize I come from a long line of bikini gardeners," she giggled. I thought of titling my next gardening book, "The Bikini Gardener," but then perhaps read-

ers would expect to see beautiful bikini clad bodies instead of gorgeous gardens. I promise not to be photographed.

Baby, it's hot outside and we gardeners have work to do. We have to be water conscious, yet we see the bare spots in our landscape and yearn to make our personal paradise a more beautiful place. What are our options?

Planting annuals and perennials offer the answers to filling in those areas that just never seem to seed well. Between the turkeys, deer and raccoons, our landscapes have many hurdles to overcome and I'm determined to continue to find ways to succeed.

Here are a few of my favorite recommendations for adding sparkle, individuality and excitement without the extra water and work this season.

*Asiatic lilies grow from bulbs and return year after year.*

- Sun loving vinca (*Catharanthus roseus*) crave six hours of sunlight a day and do well in extreme heat. Colors are violet, peach, white and bright pink. Lately I've seen these annuals on sale at garden centers for as little as \$4.50 a gallon or three for \$12, offering a kaleidoscope of shades at bargain prices.
- Lantana once established needs minimal water or maintenance. Butterflies, hummingbirds and bees are attracted to the highly scented flowers, although some humans find the plant stinky. The deer are repelled by lantana. Some cultivars have variegated leaves, and all are evergreen, blooming all year long. Trailing lantana is terrific on hill-sides and spilling out of containers. Buy the shrub variety when you want width and height that grows to three to 10 feet. Multi-colors include orange, yellow, purple, pink and white.

... continued on page D14



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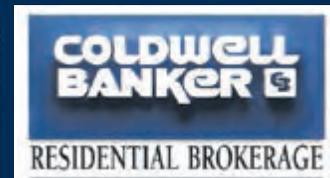
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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

... continued from page D12

- Looking for an easy-care container garden? Consider the Deckorations Collection from JBerry Nursery. Combinations of the highest quality plants paired with stylish, functional containers make for turnkey patio prettiness. I have the lantana, azaleas and hibiscus. www.jberrynursery.com
- Have you ever grown okra? Experiment with seeds from Botanical Interests (www.BotanicalInterests.com) These spineless productive plants boast flowers that resemble hollyhocks with pods that are full bodied and delectable, especially in a gumbo.
- None of the marauding animals seem to be interested in nasturtiums, making them an excellent choice when you are looking for a creeping specimen with edible leaves and flowers. Seeds from Rene's Garden (www.RenesGarden.com) are strong and sturdy. I use the big lily pad-looking leaves as wraps instead of bread and the flowers embellish my salads and plates. In the heat of summer, nasturtiums die back. Collect the seeds to plant in other areas or give away to friends. Seeds self-sow where they drop, offering you another delicious and pretty crop.
- Sunflowers make me happy. Their big bright cheery faces stand tall at the back of a garden reminding us that summer is in full swing. When dry, eat the seeds or share them with the birds. Combine hydrangeas with sunflowers for a spectacular cut-flower arrangement.



Prickly Sea holly thistles look ominous, yet are great cut flowers. Photos Cynthia Brian

- If you want to plant a native tree that will thrive in our area with no care and even less water while flowering for a couple of months with fronds of creamy crape myrtle like flowers, try a California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*). Buckeyes are endemic to California hillsides, creeks and canyons. Add one or three to spice up your yard.
- Roses are a must for every garden. I am particularly fond of David Austin Roses and have planted an additional dozen this past spring. Although bare-root arrives in January or February, a rooted rose in a gallon container will thrive when planted correctly in summer. Water deeply until established and dead head the blooms regularly for a display of beauty through winter. When you buy a quality rose, it requires little care while bolstering the drama of your garden all year. www.DavidAustinRoses.com



Buckeye Trees are native and endemic to California



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White roses are spectacular on a trellis.

- A natural and versatile herb, yarrow (Achillea) is actually a long-stemmed member of the sunflower family. Like sunflowers, it is deer resistant. Achilles, the Greek god unfortunately failed to paint his heel with a tincture of yarrow to make his body invulnerable to arrows. We know the rest of the story. Feathery, fern-like silver-gray leaves mark this fast growing native with flat clusters of florets in yellow, white, apricot, red or pink depending on the variety.
- Sea Holly Thistle (Ernginium) is a prickly textured plant with leaves like an artichoke. A sun lover, as much as the bees enjoy it, the deer don't. Use it in striking arrangements.
- A jewel of a flower, Oriental wind poppies (Papaver orientale) take two years to bloom and hate transplanting, but once you sow them, you'll enjoy them forever as they bloom from spring through summer.
- Another great Asian contribution includes the Asiatic lily. I prefer the deep pink variety, Lilium Speciosum. Plant as bulbs for a happy surprise as they burst into bloom year after year.

I'm grateful for the summer and for the heat, so I'm signing off to go play in my backyard in my bikini. Stay cool and enjoy your July family festivities.

Happy gardening and happy growing.



Cynthia Brian under an olive tree.

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1400 Camino Peral Beautiful 3bd/2.5ba townhome, fresh paint, two car garage. Conveniently located near shopping, transportation, park, trails, and library. **\$675,000**

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1056A Larch Avenue Located down a private driveway off Larch Ave is a fabulous 3bd/2ba home w/contemporary remodeling thruout. Vaulted ceilings, hardwood flrs, & spacious bdrms. Close to schools, town. **\$1,195,000**

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LAFAYETTE



New Price

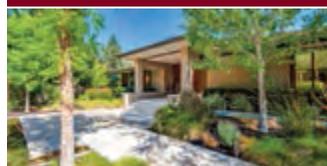
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