

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

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Orinda Garden Tour highlights outdoor living

By Sophie Braccini



A Lafayette garden on the tour seen through an arbor.

Photo provided

Five Orinda and Lafayette gardens have been selected this year to showcase the best in elegant Californian suburban outside living in the biannual Orinda Garden Club Tour May 11.

This chance to see professionally landscaped private estates and the associated social events returns every other year. The tour is first an eye-pleaser and an opportunity for inspiration, and it also includes a fundraiser that supports the club's many

local programs.

This year the tour focuses on gardens that showcase outside living and entertainment. Orinda residents Shari Bashin-Sullivan and Richard Sullivan of Enchanting Planting designed three of the gardens featured on the tour. Bashin-Sullivan, a club member, encourages garden enthusiasts to tour all of the gardens to enjoy the many flowering plants and to also "appreciate the many interesting

textures, colors and structures provided by the evergreen shrubs, the backbone of a strong planting composition." Nature in these gardens is never very far, but it has been domesticated and magnified.

The very spectacular gardens present an interesting mix of formality, with some grandiose designs that take advantage of large spaces, mixed with the abundance and more carefree California spirit. Visitors will appreciate the variety of plants such as dwarf mondo grass, mature Japanese maples, wisteria, camellia and weeping bamboo, mixed with stunning architectural details such as a fire pit set into a large boulder.

The mix of colors, atmospheres and types of features is particularly appealing in one of the Lafayette gardens that completely wraps around the house. Another garden features interesting textures and shades of green from a combination of evergreen shrubs, annuals and ferns. The attention to detail and the careful maintenance of these gardens will certainly impress and inspire.

Water features and lawns are incorporated in several gardens along with arbors and terraces, surrounded by flowers, shrubs and trees that create an enchanting oasis for the homeowners and their guests.

The event is also a fundraiser for the club, along with other events that are happening simultaneously. The cocktail party is one of them (tickets are sold separately) and the club is organizing a silent auction as well as a unique plant sale. Club member Vanessa Crews explains that all the hundreds of plants sold are the result of club members' gardening talents.

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