

## Gimme Shelter

by Andi Peterson Brown

Believe it or not, quite a few communities in the Bay Area are in the midst of a housing shortage, and Lamorinda is no exception. Ok, raise your hand if you just had to reread that sentence. I know—given the negative news out there surrounding all things housing, it seems like it can't be true, right? But I assure you, it is.

In Lamorinda, our inventory is down almost 34% year to date and we've sold more homes. We are working through our inventory without replenishing it.

Because of that, the Lamorinda market currently has about 3.5 months of inventory. That means that if no new listings came on the market, at our current pace of sales we would run out of homes in 3.5 months. Conventional wisdom says that a healthy housing market has anywhere from 5-6 months of inventory, with anything less deemed a seller's market, and anything more deemed a buyer's market.

So wait a minute. Does that mean this is a seller's market? The answer is that for some sellers yes, and for some sellers, no. We are seeing homes that are well priced, well staged, and well marketed oftentimes sell within a few short weeks. But the other homes? If the market deems a home to miss the mark in price and/or condition, we are seeing that home languish. For those homes, it's truly a field day for buyers.

Moral of the story? It's ok to sell right now. In fact, we need you. Price and market your home correctly and you just might be surprised to see the buyers come flocking.



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# Thrills, Chills, Gourds, and Ghouls

By Cynthia Brian

*"From ghoulies and ghosties, And long-leggedy beasties, And things that go bump in the night." Scottish Saying*

## THRILLS

When our children were young, October was a favorite month because of the traditional weekend we spent with three other families far from the maddening crowds on Mount St. Helena. The location was a hidden Halloween haven, miles from civilization with enough bewitching brilliance to satisfy any ghost. We stayed in a restored historic Victorian from the 1800's with a wrap around porch perched on several acres of pristine forestland dotted with fruit orchards. There was no electricity and water was pumped from nearby springs. Days were spent harvesting vegetables from the massive gardens for our meals, pressing apples into cider, hiking the hillsides, fishing in the creeks, riding horses bareback, and exploring the haunted barn where the creepy crawlies and battalions of bats burrowed.

As the six children carved hordes of pumpkins on the damp meadow, the parents transformed each of the antiquated

rooms into a wicked wonderland with ghoulish gourds, floating ghosts, and wailing witches on broomsticks. As dusk turned to darkness with only the flicker from candles, oil lamps, and a star-studded sky, a creepy eeriness permeated the pasture. Shadows terrorized the spider-webbed crevices while the costumed children chowed on spooky servings of spaghetti squash and drank magic juice potions from tombstones and rest in peace goblets. Fearsome and ferocious creatures lurked behind each squeaky door as we adults dressed to thrill our trick or treat offspring with each hesitant knock. The Montesol Halloween's were frightfully fun offering electrifying memories while being completely safe.

The ambling gardens provided the harvest collection of squash, pumpkins, and gourds as the highlight of those October experiences. You can create a comparable Halloween ritual in your own garden by planting gourds galore. Growing is easy. Plan now to directly seed out-

doors in full sun after all frost has passed next spring. We can learn from the Native Americans who planted the "Three Sisters" together—corn (maize), squash, and beans. The corn allowed stalks for the beans to climb, the beans added nitrogen to the soil, and the squash provided ground cover and shade for the roots, lessening weed growth. Since squash require large amounts of nitrogen to flourish, after this year's harvest, plant cover crops of crimson clover, hairy vetch, or fava beans to enrich the soil.

Squash has been grown for at least 8,000 years. In the 16th century, the Spanish conqueror of the Incan world, Francisco Pizarro (now that's a great Halloween costume) introduced squash to the European community. Native to South America and Mexico, there are four species of the genus *Curcubita*. Varieties of edible squash include many zucchinis, crooknecks, spaghetti squash, pumpkins, butternuts, and "pepos" or old world melons. We call them a vegetable, but they are truly a fruit. Cucumbers and many gourds are squash relatives. The wart covered, lavishly colored gourds that decorate our autumn atmospheres are inedible "pepos".

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A smiling Jack O' Lantern and Indian corn

Photo Cynthia Brian



The saffron and burnt umber shades of the pistache tree.