

# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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*Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian*  
...read on page D13

## Piping problems

By B. B. Kaye



Top right, a new copper pipe is installed to replace the aged pipes.

Photo Andy Scheck

Plumbing runs largely unseen through our homes, serving to bring us comfort and cleanliness. “Plumb” is from the Latin “plumbum” for lead, because in the early days of plumbing that’s the material that was used for piping. Lead was cheap, easy to form, easy to solder, long-lasting – and extremely poisonous.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “low levels of exposure have been linked to damage to the central and peripheral nervous system, learning disabilities, shorter stature, impaired hearing, and impaired formation and function of blood cells.” As the dangers of using lead – severe brain and nervous system damage, especially but not only in children – reared their ugly heads into public awareness, better materials were developed to safely carry the precious water we use.

Brass, copper, stainless steel, galvanized steel, “black” steel, iron, baked clay, cementitious compounds and, more recently, different types of plastic can all be found within many, and often the same, houses.

... continued on page D4