

Spring 2014

Home & garden

A special section
by the Pleasanton Weekly



Remaking history

Pleasanton couple
create contemporary home
from rundown
19th century cottage

By Cathy Jetter | Photos by Gerry and Kathy Machi

Pleasanton history has recently been preserved and protected at 1015 Rose Ave.

Just across the street from the northeast corner of the Alameda County Fairgrounds racetrack, Gerry and Kathy Machi rescued a crumbling cottage and restored it to a beautiful representation of a bygone era.

Built around the time Pleasanton became an incorporated city in the 1890s, the Machis' Folk Victorian bungalow with Queen Anne-style detailing most likely served as a sunny vacation respite for Idaho rancher Lawrence Kidd, thought to be the first owner of the house.

It makes sense that the original owner was involved with horses — from the

home's elevated front porch, the view of the oldest one-mile racetrack in the U.S. rivals those from the grandstand box seats found just across the oval dirt track. The Machis certainly appreciate the view from every angle of their wraparound porch.

"In the morning we watch the horses as they train," Kathy said. "The golf course views are great all day."

And there is not a better seat in Pleasanton come fair time. "On the nights when the fair puts on the fireworks show, they shoot them off from the center of the golf course," she continued. "We might have 30 or more friends over to watch. The location couldn't be better."

See **REMAKING HISTORY** on Page 14



Pleasanton residents Kathy and Gerry Machi completed extensive renovations at their new property on Rose Avenue, preserving and transforming the deteriorating cottage (below) into a modern family home (above).

REMAKING HISTORY

Continued from Page 13

Location may be key in real estate but timing is everything, and the Machis were not ready to put their energies into figuring out the needs of a hundred-year-old house when they saw the Rose Avenue cottage initially come on the market in 2000.

It was not love at first sight, but Kathy said there was certainly a bit of infatuation.

"We were intrigued by the potential of the house, but with one son still living at home, it was just too much to take on," she explained. "Over the years we would drive by and see the 'for sale' sign go up and come down. The Rose Avenue house was always in the back of our minds."

The seesawing real estate signs were the result of a conflict between potential buyers, who saw the property and thought "tear down," and city planners, who were prepared to wait for someone willing to honor the history of the home in spite of its neglected condition.

The aging house had two bedrooms, one bathroom, a kitchen, a living area and a mudroom, and included an addition made around 1940 without use of studs for the extra 1,151 square feet. A five-foot-high, dirt floor basement ran the length of the house, making it 1 1/2 stories tall.

The Machis were already practiced at creating a dream home from nothing, having built a custom home in Golden Eagle where they lived with their three children for 18 years. When their youngest son left for college, the Golden Eagle house felt too big, and all the square footage and surrounding acreage became a liability rather than a pleasure.

The Machis sold the home and rented a renovated Victorian on Stanley Boulevard where Kathy fell in love with all the details that kept the house authentic. "Everything had been completely redone in this tiny house," she recalled. "It was too small for us to stay, but I loved the beadboard and the chair rail molding."

When the Rose Avenue house came back on the market in November 2011, the Machis were ready to make an offer. Rather than feel intimidated by what couldn't

be saved, Gerry and Kathy presented plans inspired by what they could preserve, and the city approved the \$350,000 purchase.

The list of projects the Machis undertook to turn 1,100 square feet of deteriorating wood and nails into an historical showplace could be considered intimidating.

After demolishing the 1940 addition, the original house had to be raised, placed on dollies and turned to better accommodate the property lines and allow 10 feet to be added to expand the master bedroom and the basement. Three feet of dirt was excavated from the basement to provide eight-foot ceilings for a "man cave," three additional bedrooms, an office and two more bathrooms for a total of 2,800 square feet of living space and a true two-story home.

Every step had potential stumbling blocks, yet the Machis tell none of the usual tales of trouble with the city and overblown budgets.

‘And nearly 4,000 bricks rescued from the crumbling foundation became part of the exterior walkways and driveway curbing.’

— Gerry Machi

Gerry chalked that up to good planning, explaining that the key to making it all happen was due diligence and understanding exactly what was going to need to take place long before they finalized the purchase. "We spent a lot of time talking with our builder and our architect, so there were not too many surprises," he said.

The most challenging part of the project, according to Kathy and Gerry, was determining which details on the outside of the home could be saved and adapted to the new building codes.



The newly renovated Machi home on Rose Avenue includes an expanded back addition and garage.

"Much of the original detail on the front of the house, including the corbels above the windows and finial detail above the porch, were maintained," Gerry said. "And nearly 4,000 bricks rescued from the crumbling foundation became part of the exterior walkways and driveway curbing."

When the original materials couldn't be reused, aspects such as window details, crown molding and baseboards were patterned after the original finish details. The original studs, ceiling joists and floor joists were left in place and additional beams, "sister" joists and studs were added to give more stability.

The cost to rebuild their home was about \$170 per square foot, which is on the low end of what these projects normally cost, Gerry said, adding that most construction of this type runs around \$150-\$300 per square foot. The moving of the house and additional excavation costs were about 10% of the total budget.

Learning to navigate the utility companies and city building and planning departments was a little challenging, but the Machis were patient and with a little perseverance, things got done, they said.

"We were a little shocked that we had to pay PG&E \$4,100 to reconnect our gas and electric utilities when our builder dug all the trenches and ran all conduit and piping," Gerry said.

Kathy added that input from the Pleasanton Historical Association proved beneficial. "The one request they made was that we use turned posts downstairs where we had planned to save a little money by using plain posts," she said.



The remodeling and restoration got underway when the Machis tore down this 1940s addition to the house (shown in foreground).

Staying true to the design of the original house was the right choice, Kathy said, though the custom posts were significantly more expensive.

Though the house has been restored, the Machis are interested in learning more details about the history of the house, and they are hopeful local residents may be able to provide insight.

"While we were in the midst of renovating, an older gentleman pulled up and told us that he had visited his grandparents who lived in the house," Kathy recalled. "Unfortunately we were in the middle of pouring cement and we couldn't stop to talk just then. We asked him to come back, but we haven't seen him."

In December 2013, the Pleasanton Heritage Association recognized the Machis' achievements by

Project details:

General contractor: Vito Traghi

Architect: Terry Townsend

Civil engineer: Darryl Alexander

Structural engineer: Steven Neef

Design inspiration:
Houzz and Lowe's

More photos: - <https://sites.google.com/site/1015roseave/home>

awarding 1015 Rose Ave. with the Heritage Preservation Award.

It took 12 years for the Machis and the Rose Avenue house to come together, but just 13 months to take the house from eyesore to iconic reminder of how things used to be. ■



A panorama view of part of the basement during the renovations.

Spring is in the air, which means it's time to refresh indoor spaces to reflect the energy and optimism of the season.

The top home decor trends of spring 2014 take a fresh approach to traditional design elements to create an aesthetic that is fresh and full of life. The trends are easily accessible, so anyone can update their space with a few simple tips.

Carpet

More homeowners are seeking the beauty, comfort and safety that carpet provides, making it a top flooring trend for spring 2014 and beyond. What types of carpet are popular?

"New soft fibers," said Vickie Gilstrap, director of design services for The Dixie Group, a top U.S. carpet manufacturer. "Consumers went away from wall-to-wall carpet, as hard surface flooring gained in popularity. Then, people began to miss the softness and warmth of carpet. Carpet absorbs sound, making homes quieter and traps dust at the base of the carpet fibers so that dust doesn't circulate in the room air. The soft fibers give us a reason to put carpet down again."

She is also seeing increased interest in "mixed-media" carpet styles — with high-luster and low-luster yarns used in the same carpet. Additionally, patterns are being featured on top of texture, giving a multidimensional appearance to flooring.

Not only stylish, carpet can be healthy, too. People with allergies or other sensitivities can choose carpet as a way to improve indoor air quality. A recent study supports previous findings that carpet, when effectively cleaned, traps allergens and other particles, resulting in less dust, dander and airborne contaminants escaping into the air.

Color

Thoughtful use of color in home design is a top trend for 2014.



Careful use of textures and patterns can help highlight bedrooms and other interior spaces.

COURTESY BRANDPOINT

From floor to fixtures

Top spring home decor trends add style and personality

"Colors are getting warmer," Gilstrap noted. "Taupe is the bridge color taking us from gray to browner tones. Warm pinks are returning, as well as warmer greens like moss and olive — even apple."

Keep in mind adding personality to a space through use of warm color doesn't necessarily require a complete interior overhaul. Consider incorporating spring colors using accent

pieces. It's easy to switch up pillows, throws or artwork without investing a lot of time or money. Plus it's a fun way to update the personality of your favorite spaces every season.

Texture and pattern

This spring, more homeowners are using textures and patterns to make a visual statement through design. Strategic use of texture

and patterns can highlight certain interior spaces, manipulate the light within the room and influence scale. Blending both adds visual interest and helps homeowners create a unique space to call their own.

"Layering of pattern and texture — in floors, walls, upholstery, window treatments — gives a more individualized feel," Gilstrap said.

She suggests placing patterns on stairs or in hallways. If big and bold patterns aren't your taste, consider sticking to small, neutral patterns that can be a subtle way to add visual interest and design complexity to interior spaces.

Lighting

Lighting plays an important two-pronged role: It makes a space functional and also helps define its design aesthetic. Adjusting the task lighting within a room can instantly make the space more livable and highlight the design motif. Another easy lighting update is purchasing new lamps or simply adding new shades to existing lamps — a great way to refresh a space with minimal cost.

Keep in mind, when selecting fixtures, there's no longer a need to avoid gold tones. "Gold is coming back. We are seeing more gold and copper and less silver," Gilstrap said.

Ornamental lighting is big this year with designers thinking outside the box when it comes to how and where these fixtures can be used. For example, dramatic chandeliers are no longer reserved for formal spaces such as the dining room or foyer. This spring, you can add a touch of elegance to any space by adding a stylish chandelier, plus it doesn't take up much design real estate space. Bedrooms, basements and bars are just a few unique areas where chandeliers can be featured.

— Brandpoint

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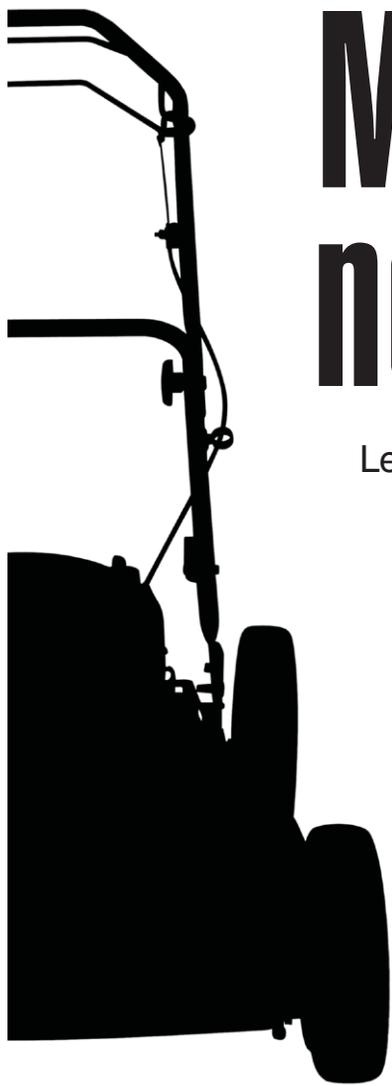
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Mow no mo'!

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COURTESY BRINGING BACK THE NATIVES GARDEN TOUR

Dixie Finley's front yard in Livermore is ready to have its lawn removed via the sheet mulching method, with compost and woodchips ready in the driveway.

Dixie Finley, an expert animal tracker, had had enough of watering her lawn, and as a long-time observer of the natural world, she knew her turf didn't provide a habitat for wildlife. So it was with pleasure on a fall morning in 2012 that she welcomed a group of 30 shovel-bearing "Mow no Mo!" enthusiasts to her front yard in Livermore.

This group, comprised of folks from first-time homeowners to seniors and everything in between, spent a few hours removing her front lawn with a method called sheet mulching. They trenched along her driveway and sidewalk, then laid out cardboard, spread compost and shoveled a large pile of woodchips. After a few hours, Finley's grass was gone and she was ready for her new plants.

With design help from Kat Weiss of Kat Weiss Landscape Design and a nearly \$500 rebate from her water district, Finley purchased a variety of native plants, including California lilac, manzanita and sages, coral bells and seaside daisies.

"I'm just thrilled," she said, looking fondly at the native plants in her garden. "I love to sit out in the front garden, watching the birds. It's so peaceful."

Finley's water bill now hovers around \$30 a month. She said she is captivated by the beauty of her native plant garden and delighted with the bees, butterflies and birds it attracts.

Sheet mulching enriches the soil as it removes the lawn, using a biodegradable weed barrier — such

as recycled cardboard — over the grass, then compost and mulch to mimic the way layers of leaves build up on forest floors. Then trees, shrubs, perennials and annuals can be planted right through the sheet mulch.

Michael Johnson, a fly fisherman, said he thinks he has been using too much water on his lawn.

"I want to leave the water for the fish and plant natives that will provide food, shelter and nesting areas for wildlife," he said. "I attended a 'Mow no Mo!' workshop last year, and I'm confident that sheet mulching is the way to go," he said.

Johnson's front garden in Lafayette is the venue for the upcoming "Mow no Mo!" workshop, which will take place from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. tomorrow. Participants will learn how to remove a lawn and select drought-tolerant plants as well as how to receive a lawn-removal rebate from the water district.

"Not only will we be using a lot less water once the lawn is gone, but we'll be receiving a significant rebate from EBMUD for removing the grass," Johnson said. ■

Sheet mulching magic

What: "Mow No Mo!" hands-on workshop

Who: Coordinated by Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour

When: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, March 29

Where: Lafayette

Cost: \$30

Register: Required, at www.bringingbackthenatives.net/select-tours



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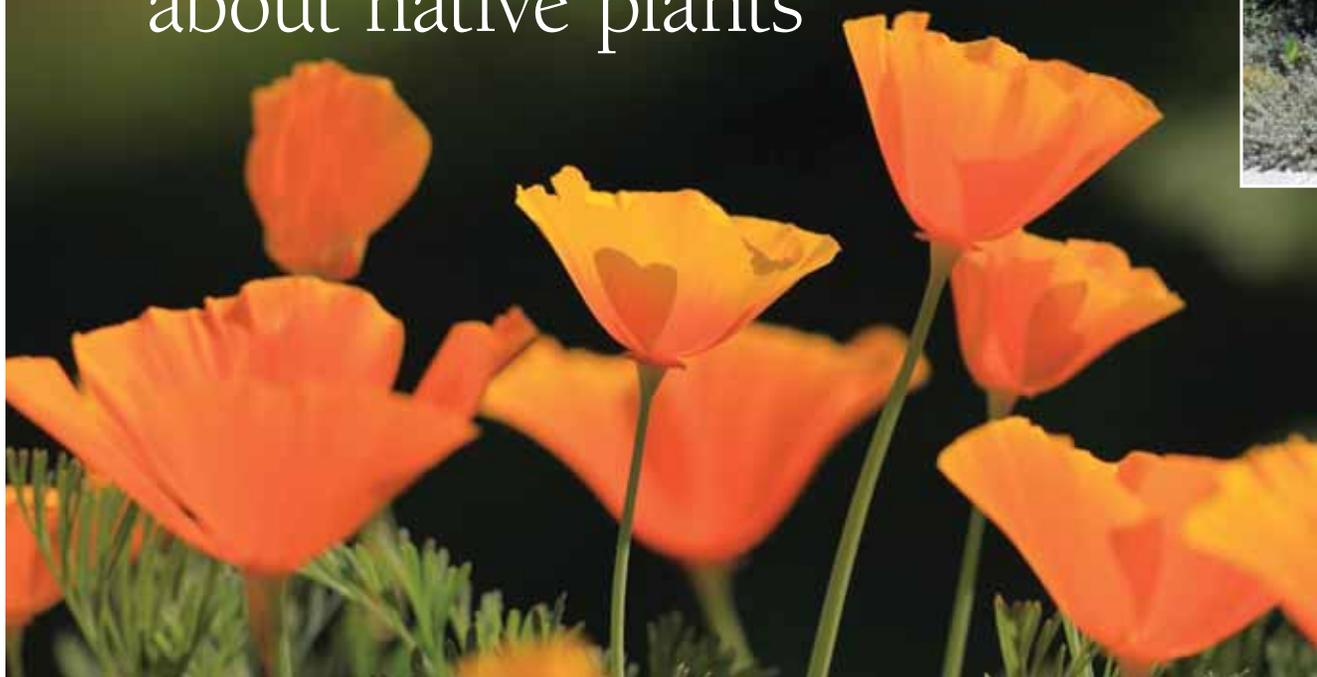
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COURTESY BRINGING BACK THE NATIVES GARDEN TOUR

New to the garden tour, Janis Turner's yard in Livermore features native shrubs.

10th annual
'Bringing Back the
Natives Garden Tour'
includes Music
in the Gardens

BY DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

More and more homeowners are discovering the joys — and lower water bills — of yards filled with native plants rather than lawns and other vegetation that require a lot of care. The 10th annual Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour takes place this year from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on May 4.

The free, self-drive tour will include low-maintenance gardens in Alameda and Contra

Costa counties that have 60% or more native plants, showcasing a variety of gardens, from large parcels in the hills to small lots in the flats.

Visitors will be able to learn how to select and care for California native plants, lower their water bills, design a low-maintenance garden, attract butterflies, birds and bees, and garden without using pesticides. More than 40 garden talks are scheduled at select gar-

dens, as well as plant sales and workshops.

To celebrate the tour's 10th anniversary, a Music in the Gardens feature has been added with Appalachian dulcimer, lutes, flutes, banjos, guitars, Renaissance and folk music, and the a cappella Berkeley Community Chamber singers.

Although no Pleasanton homes are on the tour this year, there are two in Livermore. The others are located throughout the East Bay.

This is an excellent chance to see what plants work in environments similar to your own, as well as to talk to the homeowners and get references for landscapers and designers.

Preregistration for the tour is required at www.bringingbackthenatives.net, and more than 6,000 people are expected. The website also has a list of the homes and their special features, and information about gardening and nurseries that specialize in native plants. ■

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