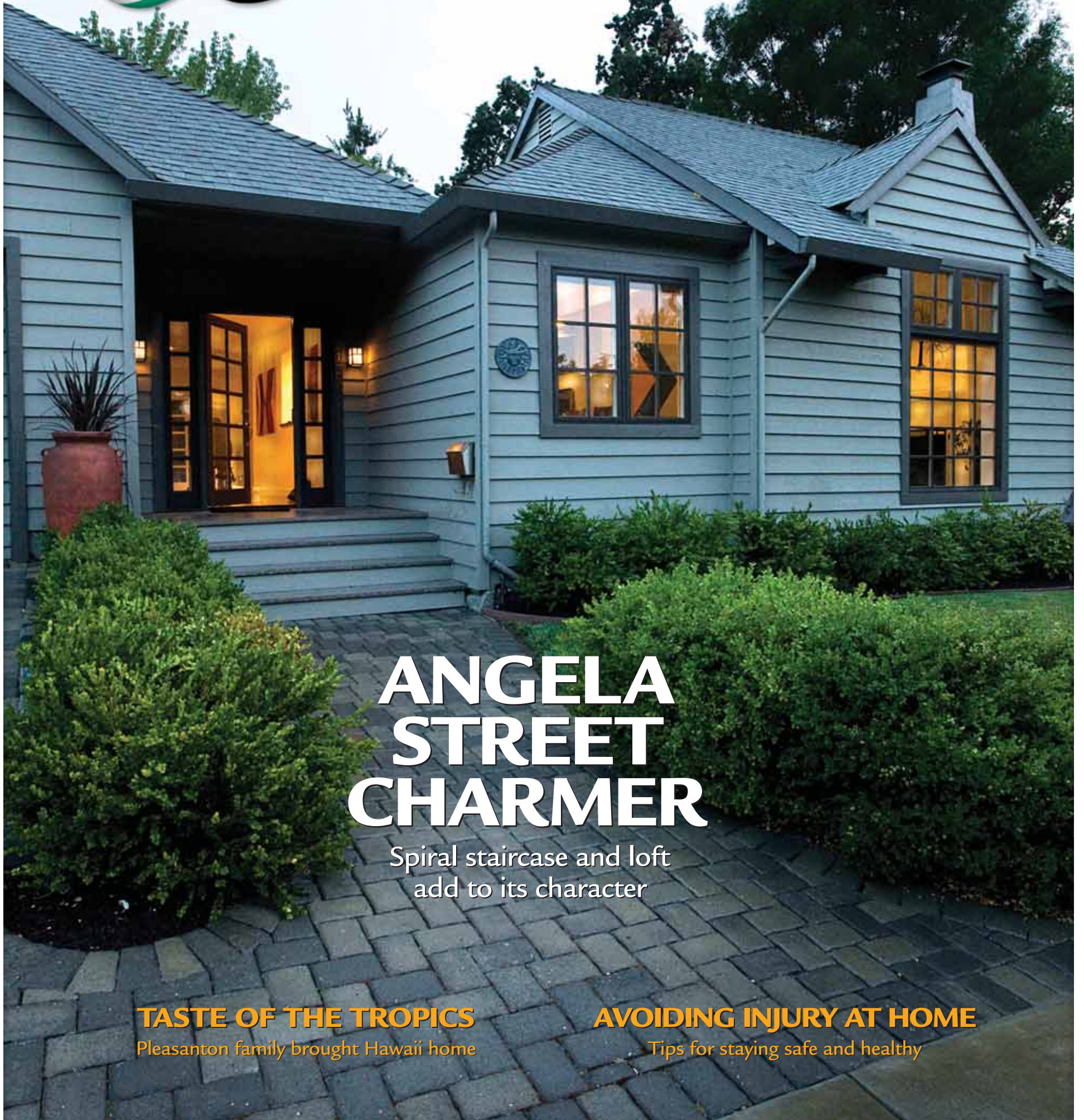


Home & garden



ANGELA STREET CHARMER

Spiral staircase and loft add to its character

TASTE OF THE TROPICS

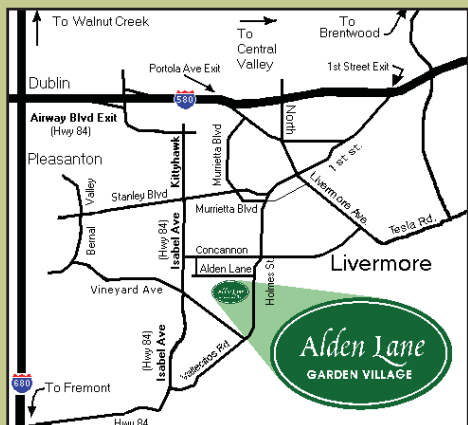
Pleasanton family brought Hawaii home

AVOIDING INJURY AT HOME

Tips for staying safe and healthy



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Home & garden

Welcome to fall

The Pleasanton Weekly is celebrating autumn with this special Home & Garden issue. For some, this is the best time of the year. The leaves on trees and grape vines begin turning golden hues before they fall to the ground in preparation for the winter. But one home in Pleasanton doesn't have your typical foliage. The Steuben back yard has a tropical theme. Take a step outside and you're transported to Hawaii. The cover story focuses on a 1930s era home in Pleasanton's desirable downtown neighborhood that has been expanded and updated. It's hard to believe the Morgenroth family bought the East Angela Street home for \$198,000 back in 1993 because it is now on the market, fully redone, for \$1.26 million. Also inside are tips on how to make your home safe, "green" your garage, pick out the latest home decorating trends and implement them in the home and finally, give your lawn that luster it desires.

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Insulation nation

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Editors: Janet Pelletier, Jeb Bing

Advertising Manager: Esmeralda Escovedo-Flores

Art Director: Rick Nobles

On the cover: Built in 1930 and expanded by its owners Patti and Jim Morgenroth after they bought the property in 1993, this architecturally-appealing home on East Angela Street is just two blocks from downtown Pleasanton.

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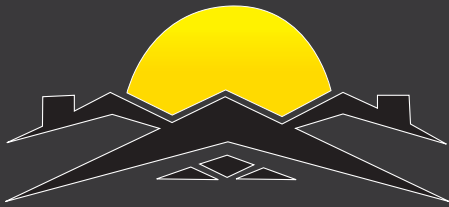
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SAFETY FIRST

By JAY JAMALI

Prevent injuries, illness at home

Fact: People are more likely to get hurt at home than at work. According to the Home Safety Council, home injuries result in 21 million medical visits a year and more than 20,000 deaths.

So what can you do to prevent injuries and illnesses at home? Here are some questions to ask yourself.

The most common cause of injuries at home is a fall. Here is how to prevent them.

- Do you keep the stairs clear? If not, tell everyone to keep the stairs clear at all times.
- Do you have night lights (I prefer motion activated ones) to light up the bedroom, halls and bathrooms? If not, figure out what path you take at night and place night lights to illuminate that path.
- Is there a mat or non-slip strips in the bathtub or shower? If not, get them and



LIQUID LIBRARY

The most common home injury is a fall. Keep the stairs clear to avoid one.

install them ASAP.

● Do you wipe up spills as soon as they happen? Do not wait because you will forget. Teach this habit to everyone in the house.

● Does your play structure have adequate clearance from other structures (6 feet)? Do you have soft surfacing under and around your play structure (9 inches of peat gravel, synthetic chips or other soft material is recommended)?

● Do you work at heights (on a ladder or roof) to install Halloween/Christmas lights? Place the ladder at a 4:1 angle. Do not reach out while on top of the ladder. Come down and move the ladder.

The causes of many serious injuries at home are fires and burns. Cooking is the No. 1 cause of fires at home.

● Do you turn the handle of pots/pans away from the stove edge? Do you use the back burners whenever possible? If you do not, someone will get burned sooner or later. I use masking tape on the ground to mark off a 3-foot kid free zone in front of the stove.

● Do you know how to extinguish a kitchen pan fire? Turn off the stove, put on your oven mitt and cover the pan by sliding the lid on or a cookie sheet. Do not attempt to move the pan or put water on it or use a fire extinguisher.

● Is your hot water heater set too high? If greater than 120 degrees, turn it down (you will prevent burns and save money on gas).

● What do you do if someone gets burned? Immediately cool down the burn and keep cooling it down for at least three minutes because even after the heat source is gone, the resident heat can keep on

burning. Do not put butter on the burn.

● Do you have a fire escape ladder? Have you decided which window you will use it on? How will you get toddlers down the ladder (you cannot carry them in your arms while climbing down the fire ladder)? For my toddler, I have a large gym bag that has a rope tied to the handles that I can put him in and safely lower him to the ground before climbing down the ladder. Stay low during a fire—that is where the best air is. The toxic gases, smoke and hot air rise so stay low. Touch the door handle before opening the door. If it is really hot, do not open.

● What do you do if your clothing catches on fire? STOP, DROP and ROLL back and forth while covering your face. Do not run. It will feed more oxygen to the fire.

● Is there a smoke alarm on every level of your home and inside every bedroom (I prefer interconnected ones that all go off when one detects smoke)? Does your smoke detector work? Replace the battery at least every six months and then test it to make sure it is working. I do it with the kids around so that I can remind them what to do when they hear that sound, otherwise they will sleep right through it. If the smoke detector is older than 10 years, replace it.

● Do you have a fire extinguisher? Is it charged? Do you know how to use it? If a fire extinguisher has not been recharged in the last two years, the chance of it working when you need it is minimal. I recommend using the old one for training after buying a new one (rated for Type A, B and C fire).

● Do you have a fire escape plan? If not develop one, communicate it and practice it.

Finally, many households contain hazardous materials.

● Do you mix chemicals? If you mix certain cleaners with bleach, you will generate the same poisonous gas that is used in the gas chamber. So a good rule is to never mix chemicals.

● Are your chemicals stored properly? Can a child reach them? Can they spill and mix and cause a fire? Do not store anything that can burn next to the hot water heater.

● What are you supposed to do if you get a chemical on your skin or in your eyes? Wash it off for at least 15 minutes. Remove any contaminated clothing and keep the eyelids open while flushing (roll your eyes to make sure the whole eye is getting properly flushed).

● Do you induce vomiting if someone eats or drinks a hazardous material? Call the poison control center 1-800-222-1222. Usually if the poison burned on the way down, it will burn on the way back up so inducing vomiting is not a good idea. I keep a bottle of syrup of ipecac handy to induce vomiting or I can use the curdled milk in the sippy cup left in the garage last week.

Jay Jamali, a Pleasanton resident, is the environmental health and safety director for Enviro Safetech, a University of California instructor, holds a degree in safety engineering, is a Certified Safety Professional (CSP) and president of the American Society of Safety Engineers Greater San Jose chapter. Comments, topics of interest or questions can be emailed to him at jayjam@envirosafetech.com.

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During a vacation in Hawaii, Pleasanton homeowner Eric Steuben was inspired by the tropical setting and wanted to duplicate the look in his own back yard, incorporating palms, cannas and hibiscus plants.

Taste OF THE tropics

Pleasanton family enjoys Hawaiian-themed back yard complete with play structure, fire pit and putting green



A trellis is covered by Thompson seedless and red flame grape vines.

PHOTOS AND STORY BY JANET PELLETIER

If Eric Steuben wants to practice his golf puts, he needn't look any further than his own back yard.

Steuben created a putting green complete with artificial turf, six holes and flag markers. It even has a center slope to help him perfect his angled strokes. But that's not all that makes up this family-friendly outdoor paradise. The Pleasanton resident and his wife GinaMarie wanted to bring the relaxing tropical setting of Hawaii to their back yard for themselves and their four young children to enjoy.

"We went on a trip to Hawaii two years before we bought the home," GinaMarie Steuben said. "Eric just fell in love with the plants there and decided we needed a tropical back yard."

When it came time to make their vision a reality, they turned to landscaper Nico Echeverria, who has now landscaped five homes on the Steuben's Carlton Oaks street, Shady Pond Lane. It was the Steubens' next-door neighbors who had recommended Echeverria, who owns Nico Echeverria Landscaping.

"It wasn't unusual until these last couple of years," Echeverria



Eric and GinaMarie Steuben, who say they are a "soccer family" love their sports turf lawn, which is dense like carpet and weathers well.

Continued on **PAGE 13**



PHOTOS BY JERRY MORGENROTH

Simple, yet comfortable furnishings in this remodeled and expanded 1930 home at 213 E. Angela St. add to its spaciousness.

Home sweet home 81 years later

Spiral staircase, bedroom loft makes this an Angela Street charmer

By JEB BING

Talk about affordable housing. This stunning 2,200-square-foot home on prestigious East Angela Street just two blocks from downtown cost only \$198,000 when Patti and Jim Morgenroth bought it in 1993. It was even much less in 1930 when it was built.

But those were “the good old days” when housing and house size was less at the time the Morgenroths purchased the 950-square-foot house 15 years ago. A photo of that original home shows that it was not quite the charmer it is today.

Jim Morgenroth, a contractor who rebuilt Studio 7 Fine Arts and the Blue Agave restaurant downtown, added 1,200 square feet to the Angela Street house when he and Patti moved here from Cincinnati shortly after their marriage in 1992. Planning to take his time in remodeling, Patti learned she was pregnant and the timeline for fixing up—and expanding—the old house suddenly grew shorter.

Working nights and weekends after a regular week of building other facilities, including many involving construction contracts with the city of Pleasanton, Jim Morgenroth gutted the house, ripping out the old lathing and plaster except for the living room, which he felt had architectural value. He put in new flooring, upgraded the kitchen and a bathroom and installed new flooring.

By 1996, with two children aboard and more likely, he also added a loft for his expanding family, which now numbers four children from 14 to 6



Jim and Patti Morgenroth stand on the maple spiral staircase that they had custom-made by a Southern California manufacturer.

years old. The loft—really a second floor—can be reached on a unique maple spiral staircase which, though it looks custom made, actually came from a mail order house in Southern California. Built there to match the specifications Morgenroth sent them, carpenters constructed the stairway, then disassembled it in pieces, shipped it here and Morgenroth reassembled and installed it at one corner of the living room, with it reaching to the center of two daughters’ bedroom. It’s a craftsman’s delight, with polished maple banisters and all.

Although the house has been doubled in size, it’s proving to be too small for Jim Morgenroth, who finds space increasingly crowded with his family of five females, especially when it comes to morning time in the two bathrooms. Surrounded by curlers, hair dryers, makeup and some in the family who like long showers, Morgenroth needs to get up very early. The home is also becoming more crowded because of the growing number of teenage friends the older daughters are inviting over.

“My kids come home from parties at their friends’ newer and more spacious homes and think we live in a shack,” Morgenroth joked. “Actually, we are a very close-knit family and this house suits us quite well, but we felt it was time to look for something bigger.”

So last year, he bought a house on Second Street next to his office at Second and Kottinger Drive and has rebuilt it with a Frank Lloyd Wright architectural design. The outside has that distinctive 1930s look, but the inside is ultra-contemporary, with open

spaces and few walls that resemble the Eichler-style homes of the 1950s. Walk in and you're in one large room that includes the living room, dining area and kitchen. Only a guest room, which also serves as an office on the first floor, has walls and a door. The five bedrooms upstairs and, of course, the three bathrooms, also are enclosed.

But once in their new home, when the girls bring their friends over for an evening of fun in the living room, parents Jim and Patti are likely to be right there, whether at the kitchen sink or reading at the dining room table.

The daughters are Hali, 14, who is starting her freshman year at Amador Valley High School; Makala, 13, now in the eighth grade at Pleasanton Middle School, and Olivia, 9, and Zoe, 6, who are in the fourth and second grades, respectively, at Valley View Elementary School. All four speak Spanish as part of their dual immersion language training at Valley View, with even Zoe now fairly proficient as a second grader. Hali has signed up for third-year Spanish in her first year at Amador.

Since neither parent speaks Spanish, they're never sure what's being said when the kids switch from English to Spanish in their conversation, although their thoughts about the wall-less big room at the new home might be a topic of conversation.

After graduating from the University of Cincinnati with degrees in finance and real estate, Jim married Patti in 1992 and the newlywed couple headed west.

Jim's parents, Mary and Jerry Morgenroth, had moved to Livermore years earlier, where Jerry owns the distributorship for Flowmax, a valve manufacturing company that builds special products for major customers, such as PG&E and local wineries. Mary recently retired as a nurse at ValleyCare Medical Center.

Jerry Morgenroth also is a freelance photographer. His full-time work in Cincinnati and now here has kept him from pursuing his hobby more vigorously, as he'd like to do, although he just acquired a new \$8,000 digital camera to do more photography. Jim Morgenroth said that going digital was a "sea-change" for his father, who used to spend many nights in his basement darkroom developing black and white photos that often appeared in Cincinnati publications.

Besides his parents, Jim Morgenroth has a younger sister, Monica, who is married and now lives in Discovery Bay. Another sister, Emily, who was a Sacramento police officer, was killed in the line of duty in 1997 when her police car crashed while she was pursuing a stolen vehicle.

"It was a difficult time for all of us because we are a close family," he said. "It was sobering and makes you think about how much you can protect your own children."

Patti Morgenroth's parents, Bunchy and Fred Thompson, still live in Cincinnati, but visit often.

"That's another reason why we need a bit more room in our home," Jim Morgenroth explained.

The Angela Street home, which the Morgenroths bought for \$198,000 in 1993, is on the market with Realtor Mike Carey, priced at \$1,260,000. With current home sales slowing down, Morgenroth said he might just rent the house until the market turns positive again, unless, of course, a buyer comes along.

"It only takes one," he added. "And this is truly a splendid home." ■

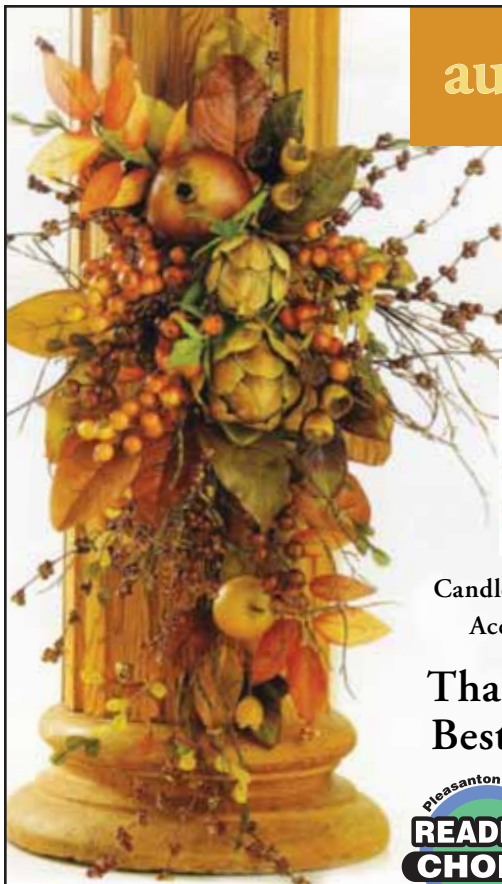


Above: Dining and living rooms open onto East Angela Street in a prestigious neighborhood just two blocks from downtown.

Left: Hali Morgenroth, 14, and her sister Makala, 13, look over the spiral stairway banister in the second floor loft they share at their Angela Street home.

Below: At left, a covered patio just outside the Morgenroth's spacious home offers plenty of room for entertaining with the manicured (at right) rear yard especially inviting for outdoor activities.

autumn tapestry



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Going for the gold

Interior designers predict what will be hot this season

The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games were a time of great anticipation. Everyone held their breath to see which athletes would emerge victorious, and were awed by what talented individuals were able to achieve in their respective areas of expertise.

There's a similar sense of excitement when it comes to home decorating this fall. With the kids back in school or settled into college, parents have renewed energy and newfound time to make home improvements.

Here are the trends leading interior designers and industry experts across the country have predicted will be hot this season, to help consumers realize their personal bests when it comes to maximizing their homes' potential.

1. The gold medal standard: Wall murals remain reigning champions, according to Todd Imholte, president of www.Murals-YourWay.com—a leader in the production of decorative products for more than 40 years.

2. Team USA: Baby boomers are asking for a new American design that is less traditional yet sensible, and reflects who they are as people, says Jan Hubbard of JH Design Group. They may incorporate mom's furniture into at least one of their rooms, while seeking an updated look in the rest of the house. McKinley Adams of McKinley's Design, sees textures evoking a similar sense of nostalgia, as they tactilely take people back to earlier, pleasurable times in their lives.

3. Lighting the torch: This fall, conventional lighting will be used in unconventional ways, according to Jeff Dross, senior product manager at Kichler Lighting. Chandeliers in the bedroom, pendants in dining rooms and multi-tier sconces in powder rooms and in the foyer will make definitive visual changes in the home. Lighting manufacturers will also continue to offer creative solutions using less electricity to promote energy efficiency.

4. The furniture favorites to win: Shapely and comfortable chairs in bold colors will make an exclamation point in any room, and should be accented by a nice contrast and blend of straight-lined and round



Wall murals will be in fashion this season.

size tables, suggests celebrity design expert, author, and national TV host/spokesperson Kathy Peterson. Furniture blends in eclectic styles with an eye-appealing mix of bold patterns such as broad stripes, abstract animal prints, circles or mixed graphics will add even more life to living rooms.

5. Synchronized colors: Susan Pantaleo, ASID with Concepts in Design Inc., notes that yellow is emerging as a very versatile color. From sunlight to Dijon mustard, the yellow palette is attention-getting, works with most design schemes, and adds life and vibrancy to a room. On the other side of the rainbow, Peterson sees cool grays, silvers, black and stone colors along with an unexpected hint of gold-tone accents this fall. She recommends metallics or pearlized paints on

accent walls, ceilings, backdrop covers for shelves, and accent shelves.

6. The preliminaries on staging a bedroom: According to Davis Remignanti, FurnitureFind.com's lead design consultant, consumers are interested in creating a bedroom retreat that calms, centers and energizes. He suggests looking for opportunities to showcase souvenirs and family photos, and utilizing walls effectively by adding a fresh coat of paint and an interesting piece of artwork. Another way Peterson recommends to enhance a bedroom is to incorporate an oversized, opulent and tufted upholstered headboard, using tone-on-tone colors that touch the ceiling.

7. Silver medalists: This fall, expect to see a bit more chrome and variations such as

brushed nickel, polished silver, and polished nickel, adds Dross. This trend has taken a long time to travel from Europe to the United States, but this is the year it should finally take seed.

8. Competing for wall space: According to Candice Matthews, ASID with CMR Interiors Inc., green goods and wall finishes will dominate this season. Finishes with burlap, limed walls and straw bale walls will be popular, as will burlap-covered walls, Belgium linens, interesting high-end finishes on millwork like driftwood, grey stains, rift wood ceruses and lacquered millwork.

9. All-around family entertainment: Because of the rising popularity of the Nintendo Wii, Xbox, PlayStation and other gaming consoles, homeowners will continue to seek ways to incorporate technology into their living areas in an aesthetically pleasing manner. Home theater cabinets from BDI, the leading manufacturer of home entertainment furnishings featuring storage for three or more components and wire management to hide all necessary connections are available in a variety of gloss and natural stained wood finishes.

Hubbard also recommends consumers place flat-screened televisions within attractive furniture pieces designed specifically for them. Whole-house technology systems that are future proof will also be in demand as technology advances at world-record pace.

10. Celebrate the Olympic culture: Follow the ages-old Chinese practice of Feng Shui to honor the environment indoors. Remignanti recommends introducing water, wind chimes, color and crystals into your bedroom design to enhance the positive energy and romantic appeal while creating a shared sanctuary.

Like the Olympic athletes, all of these are winners in the home decorating arena. The key is to balance diving into popular home decor trends with fine-tuning fundamental styles and techniques that will go the distance.

ARAcotent

Greening your garage

Being 'eco-friendly' extends all the way to the garage

Your appliances are all energy-efficient models, your home's insulation is top-notch, and there isn't an incandescent light bulb anywhere in your house. Congratulations—your home is "green." But what about your garage?

If your garage is still full of used automotive fluids, pesticides and chemicals, and still sports a drafty old door and little insulation, it just isn't as green as it could be.

Here are some tips for greening the garage:

First, clean out the garage. It will be hard to launch green habits in a cluttered, disorganized environment. Getting organized will not only help you realize what you have in your garage, it will set the stage for easy implementation of your green garage practices.

Recycle or properly dispose of any used motor oil, transmission fluid, antifreeze, pesticides, old paint or other chemicals. If you're

not sure how to discard potentially hazardous fluids, seek advice from your municipal waste disposal program. Many towns and counties now offer residential disposal and/or recycling of hazardous liquids.

If your furnace or hot water heater is located in your garage, be sure both are properly insulated, serviced regularly and not obstructed. Storing boxes, tools and other junk against a hot water heater is not only dangerous, it can hinder the heater's performance.

Consider replacing tools that leave a carbon footprint—such as gas-powered lawnmowers and trimmers—with eco-friendly options like electric trimmers or push mowers. Replace your traditional garden hose with water-efficient soaker or drip hoses. These products use less water by delivering a controlled flow directly to plant roots, where it will do the most good.

Once you've greened everything

you store inside the garage, turn your attention to the structure itself.

If your garage door is an old, drafty aluminum or wood model, consider replacing it with one made of 100 percent recycled wood fibers.

Using recycled wood fibers bonded together with resins, the doors are manufactured without the use of solid-growth timber. A polystyrene insulated core between the outer composite wood panels of the garage doors also makes them energy-efficient, plus offers excellent sound absorbing qualities.

While you're thinking about insulation, don't forget to check the quality of insulation in the garage walls and ceiling, especially if you have a bonus room above your garage, or it shares an interior wall with the rest of your house. Insulating and sheetrocking garage walls can improve your home's overall



To green the garage, consider replacing the garage door with one made from 100 percent recycled wood fibers.

energy-efficiency. It's even possible to insulate the concrete slab floor of your garage—a major point of heat loss for any garage.

Finally, think about lighting. If you're still using incandescent lights in your garage, you can increase energy efficiency by replacing them

with high efficiency fluorescent bulbs. Or, take advantage of natural light by installing a skylight. Just be sure all weather stripping around your skylight—and around all windows and doors in the garage - is in place and in good repair.

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To perfect his putting green, Eric Steuben rolled down artificial grass with carpet glue and ordered the putting holes and flags online. The green rests on a concrete slab that peaks in the center, creating more angles and a higher level of difficulty for putting.

TROPICS

Continued from PAGE 7

ria said when asked if putting greens were popular. "In this area, a lot of people practice that sport and they want to have a little piece of golf course in their houses."

The Steubens sat down with Echeverria to tell them all their ideas. Echeverria employed landscape architect Susan Ballinger to develop a master plan for the outdoor space. They got to work in the summer of 2004, laying down the hardscape and completed the softscape (the plants and shrubbery) that December.

When you walk from the house to the back yard, you're greeted by a warm, rose-colored flagstone and a fire pit where the Steuben family often spends a Saturday night roasting marshmallows. An in-ground surround speaker system provides the background music.

Echeverria said the flagstone tends to be more expensive than a stamped concrete patio, but has its benefits.

"It is pretty popular in this area because it's one of the most common flagstones out there," he said. "You pour the foundation and put flagstone on top of that with mortar."

"One of the main reasons people go with flagstone as opposed to concrete is because of the cracking effect here in California," he added. "A mortar creates a bed between the flagstone and the ground and prevents cracking. If you ever need to replace a piece that's cracked, you can go back, replace those pieces. Concrete, there's nothing you can do, but patch it, and then it won't look good."

The Steubens' 9-year-old son, 7 and 5-year-old daughters love soccer (his son plays for

Ballistic United), and Eric Steuben professes "we're a soccer family," so a tough lawn was a must on their wish list. GinaMarie Steuben did some research and found TruGreen sports turf from Alden Lane Nursery in Livermore. The premium grass has thin blades, is dense and feels like carpet.

"It's pretty close to the kind used on golf courses," Echeverria. "The main reason people request this type of grass is because it's really low growing and it's drought tolerant and resists (foot) traffic. You can play on it and nothing's going to happen. Proper fertilizer and watering are keys to keeping it nice."

Aside from the obvious sports opportunities, tropical landscaping in the form of palms and hibiscuses bring the islands in. Red and green tones are supplied by banana leaf and cannas. There are also sago palms, heaven's breath, golden showers, lamb's ear and purple verbena. When the Steubens want some fruit, they can choose from their many fruit trees—orange, lemon, pomegranate, peach, lime, pear and apple. A trellis is where Thomson seedless and red flame grapes grow. They've already been harvested just weeks ago. Not everything has gone exactly according to plan. The Steubens learned early on that only certain types of hibiscus, and other tropical plants for that matter, would survive the cold winters in Pleasanton. Learning the hard way, all 13 of the colorful giant-flowered plants they first purchased died the first winter.

Echeverria said a back yard landscaped to this magnitude could cost a homeowner about \$80,000. The added value to a home would be even more than that, he said. ■



Prepare now for a lush lawn this spring.

ARA

Lackluster lawn?

Fall is the time to prepare for a lush springtime lawn

Fall is the time to repair summer-damaged, lackluster lawns and prepare for the winter season. The time you invest in your lawn this fall will earn you lush, healthier grass next spring.

Follow these four fall lawn-care steps to promote a greener, better-looking, lush lawn next season:

Loosen up and let it breathe: Your lawn needs air to grow. As a rule of thumb, if you can't see the grass due to leaf coverage, then it's time to remove the lawn debris from the yard. Clearing leaves and clippings in the fall will help by removing the clutter that keeps air and sun from reaching the growing grass.

Aeration and dethatching loosen up the lawn, promote deep root growth, and reduce soil compaction that can keep grass from developing roots deep enough to absorb rainwater. Tackling these tasks in the fall can help ensure the health and beauty of your lawn come spring.

Fortunately, it's easier than ever to avoid the hard work of traditional aeration and dethatching methods. There are now all-natural, spray-on products that aerate and dethatch soil without mechanical means. They also condition the soil at the same time.

Drive out drought damage: Summer's drought leaves many lawns across the country straw-colored and dormant. To help your lawn recover during and after drought, fertilize it every eight weeks with a slow-release fertilizer. A lawn that has the proper nutrients grows dense and deep and will green up faster. A regularly fed lawn will also be healthier and thicker than an unfed lawn. Couple feedings with infrequent, deep watering to promote deeper

roots and offer a larger reservoir of water to draw from.

Continue to feed the need: Even lawns not stricken by drought need nourishment in the fall. Fall feeding can bring dramatic improvements as the lawn recovers from summer damage. Fertilizers help "winterize" the lawn, storing vital nutrients so that underground root development can continue until the ground freezes to ready the lawn for fuller growth next spring. Two feedings—timed around Labor Day and the end of October—are recommended for northern lawns, while southern lawns are best-fed four to six weeks before the first frost occurs.

Always overseed: Once the lawn is aerated and dethatched, look for weak spots in it. Overseeding, the spreading of grass seed directly onto soil within an existing lawn, can improve a lawn's appearance dramatically and eliminate the need for a total lawn renovation. Early fall is the prime time to overseed because the warm soil promotes rapid seed growth and typically, fewer weed problems emerge during this time of the year.

The day before you overseed, be sure to mow the lawn slightly lower than normal and use fertilizer when you seed. For the next several weeks after overseeding, keep the top inch of soil moist to permit growth.

If you follow these simple steps and don't neglect much-needed fall lawn care, you'll be amazed at the difference in your lawn next spring. Fall lawn care is your window to a spectacular spring and summer lawn next season. So "loosen up" and lay the lawn care groundwork this fall.

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Fiberglass doors are a low-maintenance, extremely durable option that provide superior energy efficiency benefits year-round.

Re-energizing for winter

Homeowners give inefficient doors, windows the cold shoulder

As cold weather advances, homeowners throughout the country can expect to see a substantial increase in energy prices. According to the Energy Information Administration, the price for heating oil, natural gas and electricity is projected to jump by nearly 20 percent.

With such high increases this year, homeowners everywhere are giving inefficient windows and doors the cold shoulder. According to a recent study commissioned by JELD-WEN, a manufacturer of windows and doors, nearly 26 percent of homeowners say what they dislike most about their existing windows and doors is that they are drafty and inefficient. As temperatures outside drop, these inefficiencies quickly turn into rising utility bills.

"Energy efficient windows and doors are crucial to maintaining a home's comfort all year long, but especially during the coldest months," says Brian Hedlund, product marketing manager for JELD-WEN. "Research shows that homeowners who replace single-pane glass windows with ENERGY STAR qualified products can save \$125 to \$450 on energy costs annually."

To maximize a home's energy efficiency, consider the following tips:

Start at the front: A home's front door can play a vital role as one of the first lines of defense against the elements. If a door does not close properly or lets in a draft, utility bills will pay the price. Homeowners should check the weather-stripping and any gaps around the door that can let heat escape. If these features cannot be easily fixed, it may be time to replace the door.

Material matters: Vinyl is the preferred choice for replacement windows today. In fact, vinyl represents 65 percent of the window replacement market. Vinyl windows reduce heat transfer and will help better insulate the home.

Another feature of energy efficient windows is Low-E glass. Low-E is a silver coating that's designed to reflect infrared light and keep homes warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer. Most window and door manufacturers offer this option.



Energy efficient windows with Low-E glass help homes stay warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer, while saving money on utility bills.

Drive home efficiency: The garage is often forgotten when it comes to energy efficiency, but it's one of the largest entry points of the home. The temperature of a garage greatly affects the overall temperature of the entire home. For energy savings in the garage, find a proper-fitting garage door and make sure that the door leading from the garage to the inside of the home is also energy efficient.

Energy efficiency pays off: Beyond the initial purchase price of a product, consider the long-term value that energy efficient products offer in terms of annual measurable savings. In addition, many local utilities offer rebates for purchasing Energy Star qualified windows and doors. To find available rebates or incentives, visit Energy Star's Rebate Finder at www.energystar.gov.

Give your home an energy makeover: A survey or audit of a home's energy usage and costs can identify specific ways to reduce home energy bills. Many state energy offices and local electric and gas utilities offer energy audit services, or may be able to provide other sources for this service.

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