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Have a story idea for one of our magazines?
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Cover photo:
The Junaid-Quarashi family, from left Alisha, Mishal, Malika and Junaid, live in a modernist Los Altos Hills showplace designed by Malika to focus on nature.
MEGAN V. WINSLOW/TOWN CRIER

Junaid Qurashi stood atop his SUV on a wooded hillside to get a better look at the San Francisco Bay view his wife, Malika Junaid, said was there.

They had discovered the 2.7-acre property on Taaffe Road while trail-running in Los Altos Hills. Although it was overgrown with poison oak that obscured the view, she saw its hidden beauty and potential.

“As much as I tried, I couldn’t see it,” he said. “But Malika had a vision.”

The upshot: The engineer (Qurashi) deferred to the architect (Junaid) and they Continued on Page 6

Architect Malika Junaid designed the ultramodern steel-and-glass Los Altos Hills showstopper she and her family call home.
bought the property where, today, they are at home with nature.

It took them roughly three years to build their ultra-modern steel-and-glass “family” home, which is nestled into the hillside. Junaid, co-founder of M+Designs Architects of Los Altos, designed it, while tech entrepreneur Qurashi pushed the envelope in making it super smart.

“It looks so modern and makes a bold statement, but it’s sensitive to the site,” Junaid said. “The interior of the house doesn’t stop your eye. It’s a part of nature.”

Qurashi put it this way: “There’s no notion of indoor/outdoor. It’s one big environment.”

Floor-to-ceiling glass walls maximize the views of the heritage oaks and the bay.

One “wall” is actually a 36-foot-wide-by-24-foot-high glass airplane hangar door. It pivots upward, opening an indoor pool and most of the home’s living areas to the outdoors.

Aircraft hangar doors are rare in residential settings, but Junaid customized the door to fit in with the aesthetics of the house. And it wasn’t easy designing a moveable 20,000-pound glass wall.

“We engaged structural and aircraft hangar engineers to detail all the forces that would impact the structure and the foundation of the house,” Junaid said.

Then there was energy efficiency to consider – plus how to create a comfortable environment when the wall is open and it’s cool outside.

“We worked with a glass manufacturer to design glass that’s efficient when closed and safe when opened and hanging horizontally above the occupants,” she said. “And we installed efficient aluminum subfloor radiant heating for comfort.”

**Cutting-edge innovations**

The wall is just one example of Junaid thinking outside the box.

“I treated the house as a blank space to experiment with things that didn’t exist,” she said. “I knew my client well.”

In the kitchen, for example, a dramatic LED-lit 19-foot-long backsplash retracts at the wave of a hand to reveal an appliance “garage.” Behind that, a second pane of glass opens to a butler’s pantry. During parties, food can be prepared behind the scenes in the pantry and passed through the opening.

With a touch of a button, a spice rack emerges from behind the cooktop in the 19-foot-long white Porcelanosa island, a chef’s dream with its vegetable prep sink and accessible kitchen utensils.

“We enjoy cooking together,” said Qurashi, who is

The “Star Trek”-inspired home of Malika Junaid and Junaid Qurashi features a circular glass dining room that juts out over the indoor swimming pool and is suspended 10 feet in the air.

**Continued from Page 5**

COURTESY OF PETER GILES

The “Star Trek”-inspired home of Malika Junaid and Junaid Qurashi features a circular glass dining room that juts out over the indoor swimming pool and is suspended 10 feet in the air.
often joined in the kitchen by daughters Mishal, 14, and Alisha, 13.

All this high-tech gadgetry might have something to do with Qurashi’s early obsession with watching the sci-fi drama “Star Trek,” which had futuristic features such as lights that turned on and off automatically and flip phones.

The focal point as one enters the house is the suspended dining room. In a Wall Street Journal article, Junaid called it “a very abstracted version of the Starship Enterprise.” It is a circular glass dining room that juts out over the indoor swimming pool and is suspended 10 feet in the air.

Reminiscent of “Star Trek” is a tubular pneumatic elevator powered by suction rather than machinery. Because it’s transparent, it doesn’t induce claustrophobia – often a problem with small elevators in private homes. It is another of Junaid’s experiments that has merit.

The elevator is wrapped by a spiral staircase connecting the home’s three levels.

Continued on Page 8
On the basement level, the indoor pool is placed so that it can be seen from nearly everywhere in the house.

“It is the center of our home,” Junaid said. “I treated it as an art piece.”

The bottom of the pool has a custom tile design of Michelangelo’s “The Creation of Adam.”

Also in the “basement” is a guest suite, which is better defined as an in-home accessory dwelling unit, another of Junaid’s experiments; an 18-seat home theater with a cushy carpet and posters of family-favorite movies (actually acoustical panels used for soundproofing); and a home gym.

Family space
As one enters the main level (crossing a bridge over a koi pond), the dining room is directly in front with the family room and office to the right and kitchen to the left. Also immediately to the left is the living room, which

Continued from Page 7

The Junaid-Qurashi family’s kitchen includes a dramatic LED-lit 19-foot-long backsplash that retracts at the wave of a hand to reveal an appliance “garage.”

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looks into a glass-walled garage where a Bentley GT and Ducati 959 Panigale are on view. (The family has a separate two-car garage for everyday use.)

“I love the fact that the family is together on the main floor. It’s very interactive,” said Qurashi, indicating the four workstations in the family room. “The communication’s good and we can see each other no matter where we are.”

On the upper level, the master bedroom and girls’ suite are on either end of a glass walkway. The girls share a bedroom, which has a panoramic view and a walk-in dual shower – practical because both are on a swim team. A Harry Potter-inspired hidden stairway leads to a loft with books and art supplies.

The home’s interior color scheme is gray and white, but the trees outside add green to the palette.

“Nature is the focus,” said Junaid, who paints in her spare time. “The interior is simple to provide a background for art work.”

The terraced hillside provides venues for dining, entertaining or simply relaxing. There’s a bocce court and outdoor kitchen.

Deer and wild turkeys wander onto the patio. They, like the family, are part of nature.

Continued from Page 8
Go into the mood for some road trips, immerse yourself in an atmosphere of beautiful plants and enthusiastic people by attending the Going Native Garden Tour, now in its 17th year.

Sponsored by the California Native Plant Society in association with the UC Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County, the tour offers an unparalleled chance to talk with gardeners and designers, view gardens of different types and compare gardens planted a year ago to those planted a couple of decades ago.

Continued on Page 12
More than 50 gardens are scheduled to be open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. May 4 and 5. Gardens in San Jose and other southern Santa Clara County cities will be open May 4, while May 5 will feature visits to northern gardens from San Mateo to Sunnyvale, including Mountain View. No Los Altos gardens will be on display this year.

To find out the locations of the gardens, register for free online at gngt.org. If you can’t make it that weekend, you can view photos of the gardens on the website.

Another free garden tour in Northern California is the Sacramento Valley California Native Plant Society Gardens Gone Native tour, set for April 27.

**Botanic gardens**

An altogether different immersive experience awaits at one of the three all-native botanical gardens in California: in Berkeley, Santa Barbara and Claremont. Although you won’t be able to grow (or find) all of the plants you see, your appreciation for the diversity of the state’s native flora will grow.

The 10-acre Regional Parks Botanic Garden in Tilden Park in the Berkeley hills is the most compact of the three. Its paths meander through well-defined plant communities, with nearly every plant labeled, so it’s a particularly good place to see coastal bluff plants and high Sierra plants on the same walk. It’s possible to visit most areas in a two-hour walk, but a slower pace and frequent visits will reward you with new discoveries.

Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, with 78 acres, features a spectacular wildflower meadow (in season), a cool woodland trail, a manzanita section and a “water-wise home garden” section highlighting easy-to-grow plants. (And I still haven’t explored the canyon/arroyo areas.) Its garden shop carries an enviable selection of books on native plants as well as garden gifts, and its nursery is open every day. It’s a great place to spend a day or two (but not in fire season!).

In Claremont, Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden

**Continued on Page 14**
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is spread over 86 acres. Like the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, it has a garden shop, nursery and library, as well as a huge collection of plants. The Indian Hill Mesa and Alluvial Gardens sections feature a series of garden rooms with different themes, well-identified plants and enough interesting features and signage for an outstanding self-guided tour. For instance, you can visit two different ponds, a California courtyard, a Native American village and a butterfly pavilion. The Container Garden and Cultivar Garden offer changing exhibits; the current ones have the intriguing titles “Game of Thorns” and “Grove of Thorns,” respectively. A couple of years ago, the Container Garden showcased edible native plants of California.

The northern 55 acres of Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, in contrast, feel more like an uncharted wilderness, albeit with wide, curving paths and sparser vegetation from more arid Southern California plant communities. Although the area is flat, minimal signage makes it a somewhat daunting place for a walk if you have limited time. The otherworldly boojum tree looms over an area of low shrubs, however, and serves as a marker for the northwest quadrant of the garden.

Apache Plume, native to rocky desert slopes, is named for its plumelike fruits, which look like fireworks. It has equally attractive white flowers.

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Road Trip

Continued from Page 12
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With spring in full bloom, it is fun to brighten any home with fresh flowers. From the farmers’ market to the grocery store, flowers are easily accessible. There are really no rules that apply. Arranging flowers is up to the eye of the beholder.

A few months ago, my family and I flew to New Zealand to check in on our son, who wanted to experience a
gap year abroad before attending college. Mount Maunganui was our first stop, the place he now calls home. When we travel, we love to visit a gallery to see the local art. I spotted a white hand-thrown pot painted candy-apple green on the inside. It now holds pretty purple tulips, stems cut down, purchased from the grocery store. Seeing that piece reminds me of my son and the gorgeous country we visited.

My mother gave me a beautiful pewter champagne bucket the first year we moved into our home. A potted hydrangea from the grocery store usually finds its home there, sitting proudly on my kitchen island, next to a bowl of colorful fruit. This simple act gives a feeling of freshness, my home renewed. It was as easy as buying the potted plant and placing it in the unique container.

My home is decorated in a transitional style, so roses and tulips feel right in my home. I find cutting the stems down and simply placing them in vases or containers under 10 inches tall the easiest to arrange. It takes me just a few minutes. I like using glass cube containers purchased from the grocery store, vintage silver pieces that have been passed down from family or purchases from Etsy like a piece of handmade pottery in a bright green, orange or simple white. I usually make up three to create a grouping on my table and a small arrangement to place on the sink in the guest bath.

*Continued on Page 18*
For my clients whose homes are on the modern side, I arrange flowers differently for them. Orchids with exposed roots in a glass cylindrical container with added bark to fill in the spaces between the roots and glass feels

Tailor floral arrangements, left and above, to fit the feel of any home, whether it is modernist or more romantic.

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With Our Award-Winning Staff We Design and Build in Partnership with You.
By Michelle Isaac

It's possible to have romantic, beautiful roses growing in your own garden. And it's possible to create unique bouquets out of your homegrown beauties. While a rose is a rose is a rose, deciding which kind of rose is right for you is easier said than done.

Roses vary in size, shape, color and aroma, and different roses grow in different environments.

I have been living in Los Altos for 20 years and enjoy gardening full time. I specialize in roses that are pretty both in the garden and in a vase at home. I have more than 35 breeds of roses, from which I select for their ability to create beautiful bouquets.

Many of my friends see my rose bouquets and are surprised by their romantic beauty. They eagerly ask the name of the roses, so I decided to start writing about this topic. The goal is to showcase the roses’ beauty and to demonstrate that they can thrive in our Los Altos climate. I will include photos from my garden and my home to help you decide which fit your tastes.

We'll start with one of my favorites – the Pierre de Ronsard rose.

The best of old and new

Pierre de Ronsard, also known as the Eden rose, was created by Marie-Louise Meilland and introduced in France in 1985. It was selected as the “World's Favourite Rose,” the highest title a rose can be granted, and inducted into the Rose Hall of Fame. Experts claim the Pierre de Ronsard beautifully combines the romance of the Old World with the qualities of the new. I totally agree.

The blooms are an unusual blend of soft pinks, creams and yellow greens. The old-fashioned, cupped flowers with nearly 60 petals are elegant and exquisite. The color will slightly change by season and soil quality. Sometimes they are more cream, sometimes they are more pink. I always like to look at them and wonder at how vigorous and varied they can be. A slight tinge of a deeper pink on the very edge of the flower makes them even more special and lovely. The leaves are strong and glossy, too.

Pierre de Ronsards have a long vase life and are perfect for making your rose bouquet. This is important, because some flowers can be beautiful in a vase, but only for a few days. I like to pick them when their flowers are not fully open. Their fragrance is very light, so it especially fits people who are very sensitive to fragrances, or
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The Pierre de Ronsard is vigorous and a very fast-growing large climber. It can reach heights of 6-12 feet. I have two Pierre de Ronsards in my garden. One is climbing on a pillar in a half-shade location, another with a tall mushroom trellis in full sun. They are both

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PHOTOS BY MICHELLE ISAAC/SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

The Pierre de Ronsard rose, left, can be combined into a bouquet with other roses and sage, above.

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Pierre de Ronsard is one of the finest climbers and blooms almost continuously throughout the season in our Los Altos climate. The first flower flush around April and May is the strongest. When it comes, sending your unique rose bouquet to your friends will make them extremely happy. It’s a gift that one is unlikely to be able to buy and of special quality and beauty.

Michelle Isaac is a gardener in Los Altos. Email isaactheflorist@gmail.com for more information.
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In the 1944 movie “Arsenic and Old Lace,” the elderberry wine served to old gents was spiked with several poisons. If the murderous aunts had simply fed them unripe blue elderberries, or red elderberries, their victims may have felt sick after a while, but they would have lived.

The Blue, or Western, Elderberry native to California is a versatile, fast-growing shrub or small tree that is showy enough for an entry garden yet productive enough for a hedgerow or wildlife garden. It tops out at 25 to 30 feet and spreads almost as wide. Its flat-topped clusters of creamy flowers attract many pollinators and beneficial insects. Adaptable to many soils, Blue Elderberry can thrive in full sun to part shade, and it is drought-tolerant but can also take moderate water.

Native Americans treasured not only Blue Elderberry’s flowers and berries, but also its dry stems, from which they made musical instruments, including clappers and flutes.

At a recent workshop given by Antonio Flores, a couple dozen people ranging in age from 5 to 75 learned how to make an elderberry flute. A docent with the East Bay Regional Parks, Flores learned how to make and play Native American flutes from Ben Cunningham-Summerfield, a Yosemite park ranger whose heritage includes the Mountain Maidu tribe. Flores said he teaches this “little-known skill” – once practiced by all Native American tribes in California – to “keep the art alive.”

With modern tools, it took me about an hour to make an elderberry flute. Flores provided 8-inch lengths of dried elderberry stems and modern hand tools. I first removed the soft pith from the center of the stem with long
screwdrivers and narrow brushes, making sure the hollow tube was perfectly smooth.

The next step was to make four holes roughly in the center of the flute. The flute can be played from either end, so if the holes are not exactly in the middle, the flute can have two different “voices.” I placed each hole so that my thumb could fit in the space between the holes. Finally, I filed the tops of each hole so that my fingers could somewhat nestle into them, and removed the bark from both ends of the flute to create a better mouthpiece.

For most people, getting a sound out of the flute takes patience and practice. Although an occasional student can play it the first day, Flores noted that it took him a few months to get a sound out of his first flute. (I’m still trying.) He showed how to hold the flute and said instead of blowing or vibrating, it takes “a baby’s breath” or “a super-duper soft exhale” to play the flute.

Flores further explained that using dry dead branches of elderberry “gives it new life as a musical instrument.” Wood cured for at least six months is dry enough so that it will no longer split.

Tanya Kucak gardens organically. Email her at Tanya.garden@gmail.com.

VERSATILE SHRUB

Blue Elderberry’s prodigious clusters of frosted blue-black berries can be eaten cooked or dried.

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GARDEN GALA

Oldest house in Los Altos

Merriman site serves as backdrop for museum fundraiser

Special to the Town Crier

_Los Altos History_ Museum supporters have scheduled a fundraiser, “A Los Altos Garden Party Evening of Memories and Mysteries,” 5:30-8:30 p.m. June 14 at the historical Winchester-Merriman House on Edgewood Lane in Los Altos, an 1880s-era property considered the oldest standing home in the city.

The event will include stories about Sarah Winchester’s connection to the home, live music, dancing, catered food, specialty cocktails and wine tasting from local vintners.

According to a Town Crier article

![Image of Winchester-Merriman House](town_crier_file_photo)

The Winchester-Merriman House on Edgewood Lane is considered the oldest standing home in Los Altos.

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Both interior, above, and exterior, below, views of the Winchester-Merriman House showcase its 19th-century origins. The property is the site of an upcoming garden party fundraiser for the Los Altos History Museum.

by historian Robin Chapman published last year, the Winchester-Merriman House sits on land that was once part of the 4,440-acre Rancho San Antonio, granted to Juan Prado Mesa in 1839. Mesa, a soldier, died in 1845. His executor sold the land for 7 cents per acre.

In 1888, there was a four-room cottage on the property when Winchester purchased it for her sister Isabelle Merriman, who wanted to raise carriage horses here. Winchester had inherited her husband’s Winchester rifle fortune and built San Jose’s Winchester Mystery House.

The sisters transformed the Edgewood site, building a 12-room Carpenter Gothic house they called “El Sueño,” or “The Daydream.” It features oblique angles, fish-scale shingles and intentionally mismatched windows – a hallmark of stylish homes of the era.

The property is an official city historical landmark.

For tickets and more information, call 948-9427 or visit losaltoshistory.org.
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