Grounded in the garden
The time is ripe to plant
a winter bounty

Also inside:
- Bohemian-chic homes
- Virtual garden visits
- Indoor, outdoor upgrades

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Have a story idea for one of our magazines?
Email Editor Bruce Barton at bruceb@latc.com.

Upcoming 2020 Magazine
Home for the Holidays
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Cover photo: Casey Carsten frequently cooks using produce from her Los Altos garden.

Photo by S.M. Lieu/Special to the Town Crier

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By Carolyn Snyder
Special to the Town Crier

Gardeners, start your engines and get growing.

This is the optimum time to plant your winter garden – even though it’s still technically summer. Cool-season vegetables need enough warm weather to grow and develop good root systems before cold weather sets in.

If that’s not reason enough to plant now, consider other benefits, both practical and therapeutic, of starting a winter garden.

“People are realizing with this pandemic how dependent we are on the grocery system, which can often let you down because the produce won’t even be ripe with flavor or good for you because of the growing conditions,” said Judith Schwarz, a native plant specialist at SummerWinds Nursery.

“I think a lot of people are working in their gardens since the lockdown. If I felt claustrophobic, I could go down to the orchard and harvest oranges and other citrus or do some pruning – nothing like getting grounded in the garden,” said Master Gardener Cheryl Breetwor-Evans of Los Altos Hills.

Last spring, with people out of work and sheltering at home, growers and online retailers nationwide reported an increase in sales of edible plants, seeds and garden products. Locally, Jeff Christensen, senior buyer for SummerWinds, said there has been a “huge uptick” – 15% over last year at this time – despite its nurseries being closed during much of April and May.

Master Gardener Julia Lovin of Los Altos recommends winter gardens as a way for novices to get started. Compared to the summer garden, with its vast armies of insects and constant watering and weeding, a winter vegetable garden is a snap.

Los Altos resident Jack Carsten, who grew up in a truck gardening family, also extols the virtues of...
winter gardens and will be planting seedlings in mid-September.

Below, our featured gardeners discuss their gardens – even offering some sage advice.

**Rooftop garden**

The dream house that Breetwor-Evans and husband Eric Evans built atop a hill in Los Altos Hills gave new meaning to the word “green” and included a 1,200-square-foot roof garden and a 40,000-gallon rainwater harvesting system for irrigation.

Breetwor-Evans, co-founder of ShareData, began planning her winter garden a few weeks ago and started her seeding.

Usually she grows broccoli, cauliflower, chard, lettuce, kale, beets, sweet peas, arugula, cabbage, red and yellow onions, garlic and scallions – and sometimes bok choy. She has herbs growing all year round.

“I may give up on the cauliflower because it takes up a lot of room and has a tendency to bolt if the weather is too warm,” she said.

Her warning: Winter gardens are not as lush as spring or summer gardens. If the weather gets too warm, plants have a tendency to bolt and that can be

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**Gardening**

The Carstens grow more than 20 varieties of lettuce in their greenhouse.

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frustrating. Some of the veggies planted in fall, such as garlic and onions, are not ready until the following spring, so patience is required.

“It’s all very worth it,” Breetwor-Evans said.

Her favorites are lettuces.

“They are so much more flavorful than anything I can get at the store, and there are so many varieties,” she added.

Because the Evanses, like most folks, are not eating out, they are relying more on what they are growing.

“We’ve been making ‘zoodles’ and ‘squoodles’ out of our zucchini and squash — very yummy with marinara sauce,” Breetwor-Evans said.

**Farm to table**

Carsten and wife Casey are food aficionados of the first degree. She has been a contributing writer and food critic for several Bay Area publications, and he knows his stuff in regard to pizza ovens, barbecues, beekeeping and preserving the bounties of their garden.

It features a greenhouse and three raised beds, each 5-foot-by-35-foot, which date to approximately 1920.

*Continued on Page 8*
They were updated in 1978 by the Carstens, only the second owners of the property. There are 13 fruit trees, and chickens provide them with colorful eggs.

Carsten, managing director of Horizon Ventures in Los Altos, planted seeds in mid-July for what could be grown under the shade cloth in the greenhouse (onions, leeks, lettuce, kale, cabbage, herbs, radicchio and celery). In a couple of weeks, no later than Sept. 15, he will plant the seedlings along with seeds that need direct seeding such as rocket, mizuna and Frisee.

“You can plant a salad crop in September and enjoy fresh plants until March, so I plant lots – probably 20 varieties of lettuce,” he said.

According to Carsten, a winter garden hardly needs any weeding, as the splurge, witchgrass and crabgrass are dormant.

“The gophers go somewhere, maybe hibernate, but the snails come out in force in cooler weather. Copper strips and bait are needed,” he said.

He uses large amounts of compost and chicken manure when he turns over the beds in March. In September, he may lightly till, but he doesn’t use amendments.

**Terraced hillside**

Lovin, immediate past president of the Los Altos History Museum Board of Directors, loves her winter
garden, some years even more than her summer one. “For one thing, I don’t need to water much, if at all, once the rain comes,” she said.

She and husband Jim live in an ultra-modern minimalist home atop a hill in Los Altos. A deck off the great room is the perfect vantage point from which to view their terraced hillside garden. At peak harvest times, she could have her own produce stand.

In addition to gardening, she’s a beekeeper and added a bee “deck” to the garden because it’s hard to maintain a hive on a slope.

Although Lovin has planted seeds, she said prefers seedlings because “it’s easier to see what’s going on and you get results more quickly.”

Different plants have different challenges. She has found that kale (she plants Russian, curly leaf and dinosaur) and broccoli can attract aphids. Chard and beets can attract leaf miners.

“I try to hose them off when I see them, and I hang traps for leaf miners,” Lovin said. “And I’ve been known to spray with Neem oil or insecticidal soap on occasion.”

Her two garden challenges are deer and “tired” soil after years of nonstop growing.

Lovin said of the former, “I’m investigating building some kind of pen around my beds. My husband

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comments that these will be the most expensive vegetables we’ve ever eaten by the time it’s finished.”

As for the soil, though Lovin replenishes it regularly with homemade compost (from kitchen and yard scraps), it doesn’t seem to be enough. She’s going to buy a tester to determine the problem. Poor-quality soil leads to unhealthy plants that don’t fruit well and are susceptible to pests.

Seeds of wisdom

Here are some tidbits gleaned from our gardeners:

• At summer’s end, when the last tomato calls it quits, don’t pack those tomato cages away. Plant peas at their bases.
• Because most vegetables come in many varieties with different maturation rates, you can plant your winter garden all at once and still be able to harvest over several months. For example, plant six to 12 plants of three different kinds of broccoli and cabbage, with maturity dates of 60, 80 and 100 days. For beets and carrots, plant the same variety of each and harvest them at different stages of growth, as needed.
• Broccoli bonus: Unlike cabbage and cauliflower, which fruit once and then are no longer active producers, broccoli continues to produce after you harvest the main head. It grows smaller “heads” that can also be harvested and eaten. It eventually seeds up shoots that look like broccolini. You can eat these, too, but if they aren’t harvested, they flower and attract honeybees.
• When cilantro goes to flower, it attracts small beneficial insects.
• Leaf lettuce is very easy to grow. Pick the leaves as soon as they’re large enough to consume, and the plant produces more for quite some time.
• There are many perennials that do well in winter: sorrel, sage, artichokes, tarragon and chives.
• Beet greens are great for smoothies.
• The last word – in late March and early April, transplant tomatoes such as Early Girl. Then in early July, pick your first tomatoes and enjoy the fragrance of a newly picked fruit. Nothing can top it.

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Bohemian-chic style involves mixing and matching colors, patterns and textures, without overdoing it.

By Celeste Randolph

As I wandered through a client’s home in Redwood City for the first time, I couldn’t help but notice unique objects all over the house – among them, an intricately carved chest, an elegant wood dining table and gorgeous pottery. I learned that the husband and wife had amassed a collection of one-of-a-kind, handmade items from all over the world through years of traveling for work.

We knew immediately that we wanted to incorporate...
In a client’s Redwood City home, Celeste Randolph used hand-painted zigzag draperies from the client’s favorite London-based designer, Kit Kemp. From Rajasthan, India. Hand-painted zigzag draperies from the couple’s favorite London-based designer, Kit Kemp, add whimsy and a personal touch to the

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these items into the design of the home. The challenge for me as the designer was figuring out how to collect and highlight all of these beautiful and diverse pieces while maintaining a clean and fresh feel. The couple’s style leaned Bohemian, but we also wanted the home to feel classic and timeless.

Bohemian-chic style done well is an art form. It requires taking an eclectic collection of objects and elements and pulling them together in a way that feels effortless. It’s all about mixing and matching colors, patterns and textures, but making sure not to overdo it.

The dining room and living room flow into one another, so we opted to pair their wooden dining table from Italy with oversized gray velvet chairs. We grounded the space with a modern, textured gray rug in rich, soft wool to make it cozy. We placed aboriginal art from Australia above an intricately carved dowry chest from Rajasthan, India. Hand-painted zigzag draperies from the couple’s favorite London-based designer, Kit Kemp, add whimsy and a personal touch to the

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In a client’s Redwood City home, Celeste Randolph used hand-painted zigzag draperies from the client’s favorite London-based designer, Kit Kemp.
living room. The couple has three young children, so we wanted to ensure that the home felt livable and fun. Their 8-year-old daughter had created a blue ombre painting on canvas in their garage using just paint, water and a paper plate. We added a classic brass frame to give her piece the modern art treatment, and the painting now hangs at the head of the dining room table.

Creative design
I recently picked up a copy of designer Justina Blakeney’s “The New Bohemians: Cool and Collected Homes.” I paged through images of interiors filled with beautifully diffused light, lush plants and colorful prints filling the homes of young creatives. Blakeney has hit on something that people are craving right now: homes that are personal without feeling kitschy, and collected rather than cluttered. Blakeney, who grew up in Berkeley, developed her bohemian aesthetic through her multicultural background.

Aboriginal art from Australia hangs above an intricately carved dowry chest from Rajasthan, India.

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upbringing. Her childhood home stylishly blended her cultural roots (Blakeney is half-Black, half-Eastern European Jewish) and later led her to pursue a degree in world arts and cultures at UCLA, followed by extensive international travels.

After living and designing in Italy for seven years, she brought her eclectic style back to the U.S. and started a design blog that quickly became wildly popular. At the core of her design philosophy is the belief that the key to an amazing home isn’t wealth, but creativity.

Now based in Los Angeles, many of Blakeney’s clients are what she refers to as “New Bohemians” – creative individuals who range from boutique owners and artists to urban farmers, and who apply their free-spirited mindset to their home design. The new boho home often blends work and leisure, and can include an office, a gallery, a showroom and even a restaurant. The book focuses on the do-it-yourself elements of bohemian design to make this type of aesthetic accessible to all.

When trying this style at home, select a few items that you love and build around those. Taking a DIY approach is a great place to start. If you find yourself looking for guidance in how to pair pieces or edit your home, that may be when you turn to a design professional for some guidance in combining your personal style and home with a bohemian look.

It’s possible to have a relaxed vibe and visual interest through a set of carefully edited and curated pieces that reflect your life, values and style. In your home, you can build on a neutral palette and inject bold colors, handmade objects and layers of texture to tie everything together.

Above all, boho style should feel personal. It tells the story of you, your family and your home through pieces that carry meaning.

Celeste Randolph is an interior designer in Los Altos. For more information, visit celesterandolphdesigns.com.
In the native garden, summer and early fall are a good time to assess your existing plantings and figure out what to do once the rainy season begins. If you are planning a new garden, this is the time to look for ideas and source plants.

For inspiration, one of the best sources is annual

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FIELD TRIPS

native garden tours. This year, garden tours went virtual. No need to skip a day working in your own garden to drive all over the place! You may not be able to see all of these plants and landscapes in person, smelling the lovely fragrances and hearing the busy pollinators, but you can visit native gardens all over the state virtually and on your own schedule.

The California Native Plant Society has a web page listing six garden tours, half of them in the Bay Area. To see the list, visit cnps.org/gardening/local-gardens. Each tour offers different resources, from photos and descriptions of gardens to video segments. The great advantage of a virtual tour is that you are not limited to a specific date and time, and you can visit as many gardens as you choose. Below are some highlights.

Tour time

• The Going Native Garden Tour (GNGT) is the one closest to home, featuring eight gardens in Los Altos and Mountain View this year. Its user-friendly web page is an incredible resource, offering extensive photos of each garden – not only the 70-plus gardens featured this year, but also many gardens from each year since 2006. Not every garden has a video segment, and the videos vary widely, from a three-minute time-lapse covering 18 months (Matadero Garden, No. 14) to enthusiastic Los Altos homeowners taking turns talking about a relatively new garden (Hingwe-Sharma garden, No. 23).

Many of the Going Native virtual tours were prerecorded and edited. That gave the presenters the opportunity to include plant names in the video, show what summer- to winter-blooming flowers look like, and even include some garden tips. An excellent example is the video for Low Water Cottage Garden, No. 50. The owner, a landscape architect, focuses on each plant as she discusses it, and offers maintenance tips as well as garden ideas.

Several GNGT Zoom sessions have been posted as well, and additional interactive Zoom sessions have been scheduled through the summer. Check the main GNGT page to find out when the next live session is scheduled.

• The East Bay’s Bringing Back the Natives (BBN) garden tour featured a talk by Doug Tallamy on “Restoring the Little Things That Run the World.” This East Coast professor of entomology has given a version of this talk to many groups, but in this version, he focused more on California caterpillars and plants. You can learn something new each time you see one of Tallamy’s presentations.

The BBN garden and nursery visits, approximately 20-30 minutes each, had interesting moments, but they were all recorded live and so have the inevitable glitches and blurry segments. The Zoom sessions took place on three consecutive Sundays, four to five

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A meadow filled with yellow bush lupines brightens a corner of this Mountain View garden in the spring.
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hours each, and they are posted on BBN’s YouTube page. Several of the garden visits are also posted separately.

- The Yerba Buena Chapter (San Francisco) Virtual Garden Tour covers fewer gardens. The web page for the tour has descriptions and photos for 19 gardens. In addition, the recorded Zoom session includes talks by Matt Ritter on iconic flora of California and Amber Hasselbring on backyard biodiversity. I especially enjoyed Mike Belcher’s talk on growing California pipevine. It’s an easy plant to propagate, has unique flowers and is the only food source for Pipevine Swallowtail butterflies.

Finally, the wealth of video tours narrated by resident gardeners are an unexpected bonus of sheltering in place. Whatever their level of expertise in gardening or videography, the gardeners’ enthusiasm and idiosyncrasies make the presentations worthwhile. The slower pace of a narrated tour can highlight features you may not have noticed in person. As a docent, I’ve observed visitors streaming through gardens, rarely pausing to absorb details.

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

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**FIELD TRIPS**

Growing the California Dutchman’s Pipe on a trellis against a fence highlights the interesting flowers in this Los Altos garden.
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Q: A leak was just discovered behind a wall in our shower. We’ll have to remove the tile to repair it. What are some of the newer options for people who are remodeling a shower?

A: There are more choices to improve a shower experience these days than ever before, including showers with curbless entry, horizontal body sprays, rain showerheads, chroma light sensory therapy and music from...
wireless speakers. Showerhead technology has improved to allow a low-flow showerhead to feel like there is enough spray pressure to rinse out shampoo in a reasonable amount of time. When remodeling a shower, consider a rain showerhead, which can be mounted on the ceiling with a stem, or on a long arm from the wall. There are round and square heads, standard and oversized, and a variety of finishes. If you want to keep a shower simple with one head, consider mounting it on an adjustable bar, connected to a hose. The adjustable setup accommodates most people’s height, and the showerhead can be taken off the bar to clean a dog or clean the shower itself.

Linear drain systems eliminate the use of a traditional center drain, allowing for the floor surface to be pitched in one direction. This makes it a lot easier to design with nearly any tile size or slab material to make the shower layout clean and elegant. A linear drain offers advantages over the traditional center drain, where the floor must slope in four directions to

Showerheads come in various types and configurations. A single shower can include multiple heads.

Continued on Page 26
properly drain the water.

Niches and benches can be built in for keeping personal items neat and easy to reach. Benches also serve multiple purposes and are helpful, along with grab bars, for shower safety.

The materials choices abound for showers — ranging from large-format porcelain tiles to solid surface, natural stone and porcelain slabs. There are also glass, stone, metal and ceramic tiles. Wet-listed LED lighting should be included in every shower remodel. One trick I like to use is to install outdoor light fixtures on the ceiling or wall of a shower.

The beauty of designing a new shower today is that it can be customized to suit virtually any functional requirement and aesthetic desire.

As the shelter-in-place orders continue, some homeowners may consider creating a nicer outdoor living space and kitchen.

Q: With the continuation of the shelter-in-place orders, we have decided to create a nicer living space outside, along with an outdoor kitchen. What are interesting design ideas for outdoor entertaining, and

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what are some of the newer outdoor appliances we should be considering?

A: In 2020 and beyond, outdoor living and entertaining will be different for each family and outdoor space. However, the overall approach should be the same – extend indoor living activities outdoors wherever possible. There are few rules, other than ensuring

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ease of use and protection from outdoor elements.

Outdoor spaces have taken a cue from indoor great rooms. A variety of elements can make these spaces as sweet as any luxurious hotel. There are outdoor televisions that can be installed next to a pool, wood-fired pizza ovens that reach 900 degrees, beer taps, outdoor dishwashers, outdoor wine refrigerators and all manner of daybeds. The list goes on.

One of the more recent introductions for outdoor kitchens is powder-coated steel cabinets, which are similar to the look and function of indoor kitchen cabinets.

Door styles vary from simple, modern slab doors to Shaker frame style, beadboard designs, baked-on wood grain patterns and even patterns matching the latest in Dekton countertop material patterns so that the counters and cabinets have a monolithic appearance. This is a very modern aesthetic – perfect for clean architectural building styles.

Countertop materials are always a consideration. While natural stone such as granite has been used...
DESIGN TRENDS

Options for outdoor living spaces include kitchens, above, and seating areas, such as a geometric day bed, left.

for many years, it is porous – meaning somewhat absorptive, even when sealed – and therefore takes some work to maintain. An improved counter material choice for ease of maintenance over natural stone is a sintered particle surface material, such as Dekton or Neolith. It is a nearly perfect choice for outdoor counters because it is not absorptive and there are no chemical binders, which react with high-heat pots and pans and result in a scorched surface. Wine or vinegar cannot etch into a sintered particle surface. These materials are all solids, so they don’t discolor and are also extremely resistant to scratching.

In a new outdoor kitchen, it is easy to grill, roast, smoke and sauté – all while putting on a show. App-driven outdoor fans and beautifully designed outdoor LED lights illuminate all night long. As live sporting events return, the bartending station can be ready to go with icemaker, chilled and filtered carbonated water, beer and wine taps and glass-door beverage refrigerators, all in full view of multiple screens and layered audio. Heaters or misters keep the comfort levels in check.

Seating areas can be both comfortable and luxurious, featuring outdoor area rugs and endless sizes and shapes of fire pits, fire tables and fire pylons. From a lounge in the shallow end of the pool to covered modular daybeds, one can have his or her sculpture and furniture all in one design.

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