

& HOME GARDEN

SPRING
2026

A LOS ALTOS TOWN CRIER PUBLICATION



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FOR ANY
SITUATION**

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ON THE COVER:
Courtesy of Turbow Farms, Los Altos, California

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Easy Natives for Any Situation

By Tanya Kucak

If you've attended the recent Growing Natives Garden Tour, or noticed native plants popping up in your neighborhood, here's a guide to some of the easiest-to-grow natives that can fit in any situation. These plants are relatively fast growing as well, flowering within a year or two after planting and reaching full size within two to three years. They are all drought tolerant once established and require good drainage, but tolerate occasional summer water.

Douglas iris hybrids bloom in late winter to early spring. They can grow in sun or shade, but in hot locations, they look best in part shade or with occasional summer water. They are low-growing and form slowly expanding clumps. A multitude of colors are available, best purchased while in bloom. A particularly large-flowered and floriferous selection is Canyon Snow.

Hummingbird sage blooms from late winter until early summer and, true to its name, is a hummingbird magnet. It forms a dense weed-suppressing groundcover for dry shade. Occasional summer water will keep it looking fresher, however, especially where it is in full sun. It spreads slowly by rhizomes, which are easy to control if needed, and the only maintenance is trimming spent flower stalks. →



Iris



Hummingbird Fuchsia



Iris



White Sage



Hummingbird Sage



Penstemon

Deergrass is a well-behaved grass for full sun that forms a symmetrical mound about 5 feet high and wide. It can be planted as a focal point or in a well-spaced clump, allowing each plant enough space. Like most grasses, its deep roots make it a good choice for erosion control.

White sage adds drama and sculptural interest to the garden, with its many long flowering stalks. It does best in full sun. The plant itself is up to 3 feet high, and the flowering stalks add another 2 to 6 feet. It's a good shrub for erosion control on slopes, where it looks good without additional water but can tolerate some. The silvery white foliage glows on overcast days or on moonlit nights, and it makes an excellent plant for a white garden that is enjoyed at night.

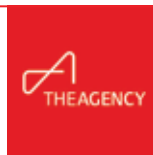
Foothill penstemon, with its purple-blue flowers, combines especially well at the edge of a path with orange California

poppies. It forms a loose mound about a couple feet high and is usually covered in flowers in the spring. Plant it in full sun.

Hummingbird fuchsia takes over as a hummingbird magnet as the flowers of hummingbird sage fade. In the spring, the former often looks like a dense mound of gray-green foliage. As the days lengthen and heat up, the red-orange flowers begin to emerge, covering the whole plant until frost. Many cultivars are available, ranging from groundcovers to 5-foot shrubs, with a color range from reds and oranges to white, pink and salmon. Some varieties spread readily by underground rhizomes. Once established, cut back to an inch high in the winter to enable lush spring growth to flourish.

This is a small selection of adaptable native plants for many situations.

Tanya Kucak gardens organically. 🐦



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Local GARDEN DESIGNER *Publishes* CHILDREN'S BOOK



By Abigail Min

Town Crier Editorial Intern

Between vibrant images of talking animals, flora and fauna – and a lush secret garden – the new children's book “Through the Garden Gate” tells the story of a young boy named Miles who stumbles upon his neighbor's secret garden and discovers a magical world.

The book's author, Los Altos garden designer Sharon Rose, said her debut includes “a nod to ‘The Secret Garden’ meets ‘Alice in Wonderland.’”

Released April 7, the book is aimed at children ages 3–8. Rose came up with the idea during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I had a lot of time to think, and I thought I'd like to teach children about plants,” she said. “I'd like them to be outside, not being afraid of gardening, not feeling like they can't garden, to feel comfortable, to be curious, to enjoy it, because it's something I enjoyed as a little girl.”

Growing up, Rose said she spent a lot of time in the garden with her father and grandfather, who taught her the basics of gardening. She also drew inspiration from her next-door neighbor at the time. That neighbor is a character in the book, Ms. Mary.

“Ms. Mary, Mary McCreath, she mentored me in gardening,” Rose said. “She would have me come over →



Los Altos garden designer Sharon Rose (pictured) used her passion for gardening to create children's book “Through the Garden Gate.”
PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDREA BURNETT



A full-length portrait of Nicholas French, a man with short brown hair, smiling. He is wearing a light blue button-down shirt and grey trousers with a black belt. He is standing outdoors with green foliage in the background.

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"Through the Garden Gate" was written by Los Altos garden designer Sharon Rose. It follows a child named Miles.
ILLUSTRATION BY ERIN BROWN



**"I had a lot of
time to think,
and I thought
*I'd like to teach
children about
plants.*"**

**– Sharon Rose,
Author**

and help her on gardening projects, and teach me gardening techniques, how to loosen the roots of this plant to properly plant it, and how not to pack it in too tight, and how much watering and which ones need shade."

While Rose wrote the 32-page book, Erin Brown of Ireland did the illustrations. Rose described her as a "modern-day Beatrix Potter," who created Peter Rabbit, due to her vibrant illustrations.

Rose said many of the natural settings in the book were inspired by one of her client's gardens. She held her book launch party last month at the Los Altos home of that client, Joan LeMahieu. Now close friends, Rose said she met LeMahieu in 2018 and that her struggles with gophers in the garden appear in the book. →



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“Maybe it
could inspire
the *next*
botanist or
scientist.”

– Sharon Rose



“We came across lots of issues with gophers tearing up the plants, crabgrass, invading all the other flowers,” Rose said.

“There’s funny moments in the children’s book where the main character, Miles, comes across the gophers and the crabgrass and comes up with a plan to solve the problems of these garden creatures.”

LeMahieu said she was touched that her English garden, mixed with California native plants like coral bells, made the book.

“When I think of reading it to my granddaughter, I think it will inspire her to plant a garden. I think it will inspire her to think about planting kindness, to overcome obstacles,” LeMahieu said. “It’s a sweet story, and I think it’s an inspiring one.”

Rose hopes it will do just that.

“Maybe it could inspire the next botanist or scientist. I mean there’s so much we don’t know about plants,” Rose said. “Maybe the next generation will read and they’ll want to learn about things that we don’t know about plants to this day.”

“*Through the Garden Gate*” is available online at the Collective Book Studio for \$19.95. To purchase the book and for more information, visit tinyurl.com/GardenGateBook. 🐾

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Creating a World of Abundance Through Flowers

By Charmaine Turbow

Head Farmette of Turbow Farms, Los Altos

There's something deeply grounding and rewarding about stepping outside and cutting your own flowers – fresh, sun-kissed, and grown with intention. At Turbow Farms, we believe a cutting garden doesn't need to be expansive to be abundant. In fact, a thoughtfully planted 4-by-8-foot bed can provide armfuls of blooms from early spring through fall, if you plant with the seasons in mind.

Here's how to create a small but mighty cutting garden that keeps on giving.

Start early: Source plants ahead of the season

A successful cutting garden begins long before your hands touch the soil. Plan to source your seeds, bulbs and tubers about three months in advance. This is especially

important for spring bloomers like ranunculus, anemones, tulips and narcissus, which often are planted in late fall or early winter. The same goes for dahlia tubers and chrysanthemum starts for later in the season.

Take a little time to research and learn about each variety you intend to plant. Knowing which plants to pinch and when is also essential.

Prepare soil and irrigation

Cut flowers will be strong and vibrant so long as you have full sun and regular irrigation. High-density planting will also require nutrient-rich and well-draining soil. Don't forget to take preventive measures to protect your bounty from vermin such as deer and gophers. →

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waiting to happen.

Design with intention: Plan your spacing

In a 4-by-8-foot bed, every inch matters. Think in rows or blocks, grouping flowers by height and bloom time. Place taller flowers like dahlias, zinnias and cosmos toward the back so that they do not overshadow shorter blooms. You can even get creative with a trellis to vertically grow vining flowers like sweet peas and hyacinth beans. Afternoon shade from taller plants can also be used to your advantage as early spring heat stress is not uncommon in our area.

A good rule of thumb is to plant more densely than you would in a traditional garden. Tight spacing actually encourages longer stems, which are ideal for cutting. High-density planting also means there is less weeding!

Imagine your garden not just as a landscape, but as a bouquet waiting to happen.

Follow the rhythm: When to plant

Your garden will evolve beautifully as the seasons shift.

In late fall, plant your cool-season flowers: ranunculus, anemones, narcissus, sweet peas, stock and snapdragons that will show their bounty in early spring. If you're planning on growing tulips, be sure to source pre-cooled tulip bulbs as our growing zone is typically not cold enough for regular bulbs to perform well. →



Garden-grown flowers can bring the beauty of nature indoors.
PHOTO BY KELLY WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY, COURTESY OF CHARMAINE TURBOW

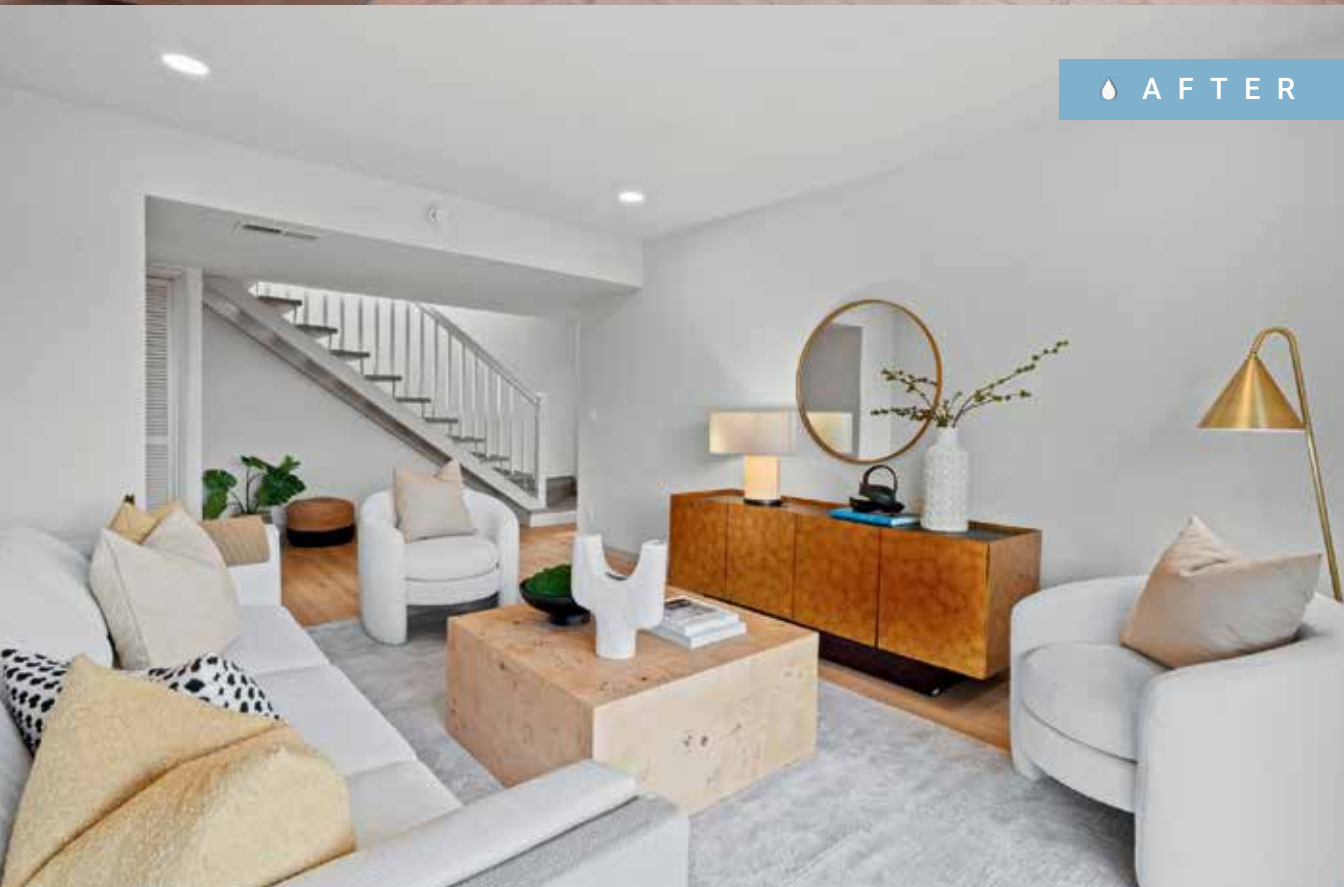
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Flowers can be harvested year-round, and gardening should follow the flowers' cycles. PHOTO BY KELLY WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY, COURTESY OF CHARMAINE TURBOW



As the temperatures rise in mid-spring, transition into your warm-season plantings. Dahlias, cosmos, zinnias, orlaya, strawflower, celosia and lemon basil can be planted. These are your summer workhorses – prolific, colorful and incredibly generous with their blooms. Chrysanthemums follow close behind, establishing in summer and flowering as the days begin to shorten into fall.

By layering your planting this way, your garden moves in a natural rhythm, always offering something new to cut.

Harvest often: When and how to cut

The secret to a productive cutting garden is simple: The more you harvest, the more your plants will produce. Stock



is a notable exception – once it's cut, it won't bloom again.

It is best to harvest your flowers in the early morning, when they are most hydrated. For spring blooms like tulips and narcissus, cut when the buds are just beginning to show color. Ranunculus and anemones are best harvested when they feel soft – like a marshmallow – indicating they're ready to open fully in the vase.

For summer flowers like dahlias and cosmos, harvest blooms when they are 75% open. Zinnias should be harvested when they are fully open and stems are very stiff. And don't be shy – cut deeply. This encourages plants to side branch and send up longer, stronger stems for your next harvest.

A garden that gives back

A 4-by-8-foot cutting garden may be small in size, but it can be mighty, offering something truly meaningful: a steady connection to the seasons. From the graceful blooms with the wake of spring to the bold abundance of summer and fall, each stem tells a story of time, care and intention.

And perhaps the best part? You don't have to go far to gather beauty! It's right outside your door, waiting to be brought in.

For a suggestion of seasonal flowers, when to plant, and spacing, visit us at turbowfarms.com/blog/cut-flower-garden-guide. 🌱



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YOUR HOME'S *Cutest* THREAT



By Josh Rombro

Your home is under attack, and the culprit is coming from within the house! They have four paws, no shame and pretty privilege. Their name is the password to your Wi-Fi and somehow it feels like they know it. Yes, it's your dog. You've caught them red-handed before. You've told them to stop. They obviously don't listen. And then they chewed up your baseboards, ruined that coffee table, ran you through three remotes, peed on your grandma's rug,

and are probably making mountains out of molehills in your yard.

You have worked so hard to provide a nice home for your family, pup included, but they seem to think everything and anything is fair game as a chew toy. So what can you do? In the short term, you should start with common-sense management. When trying to resolve a problem, some management is appropriate. Put at-risk objects out of reach and out of sight as much as possible. Use baby

gates, fences and crates appropriately to limit risk and access. Work as a family to create a comprehensive plan of how the dog is to be supervised or managed throughout the day.

Dogs are very "present" thinkers. They don't easily understand after the "crime" that you are upset about what they did earlier. If they already "did the crime," all you can do is clean it up. Your dad was wrong when he told you to rub their nose it. If you are upset, be upset at yourself for →



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leaving them unsupervised. Instead, plan to catch them next time they are thinking about it. As soon as you see them thinking about making that mistake, correct them, and guide them to a better decision. If they were going to gnaw on the baseboards, give them a better chew toy. If they were going to pee on the floor, get them outside! If they were going to dig up a new layer of topsoil, give them a more

appropriate outlet for that energy. And make sure to praise them for making a good decision to respect you and move on.

But even still, we haven't addressed the issue. All of the above is "management." The real question is "Why?" Why is your dog gnawing on the baseboards, peeing on that carpet, destroying your remotes or digging up your yard? Don't just say, "Because it's

a dog!" It isn't just that puppies gnaw, but that they are teething and need something to chew to soothe their gums. It isn't just that your dog isn't potty trained, but that the carpet has become their favorite throne, and you need to create a more comprehensive potty plan. It isn't just that your dog likes remotes, but that they might be bored and angry at your favorite toy. It isn't just that your dog likes digging, but they might be looking for something, or hiding something, and you should check on their diet and health. Make sure that you aren't just managing the symptoms, but are actually addressing the cause. Only managing symptoms can get you stuck in a cycle that can become hard to break.

Your dogs are a huge part of your family. Sometimes that means loving them despite the headaches, because they give us so much love in return. If you need help addressing your loved one's needs, don't be afraid to get help!

Josh Rombro is a Canine Behavioral Therapist and Master Trainer. 🐾



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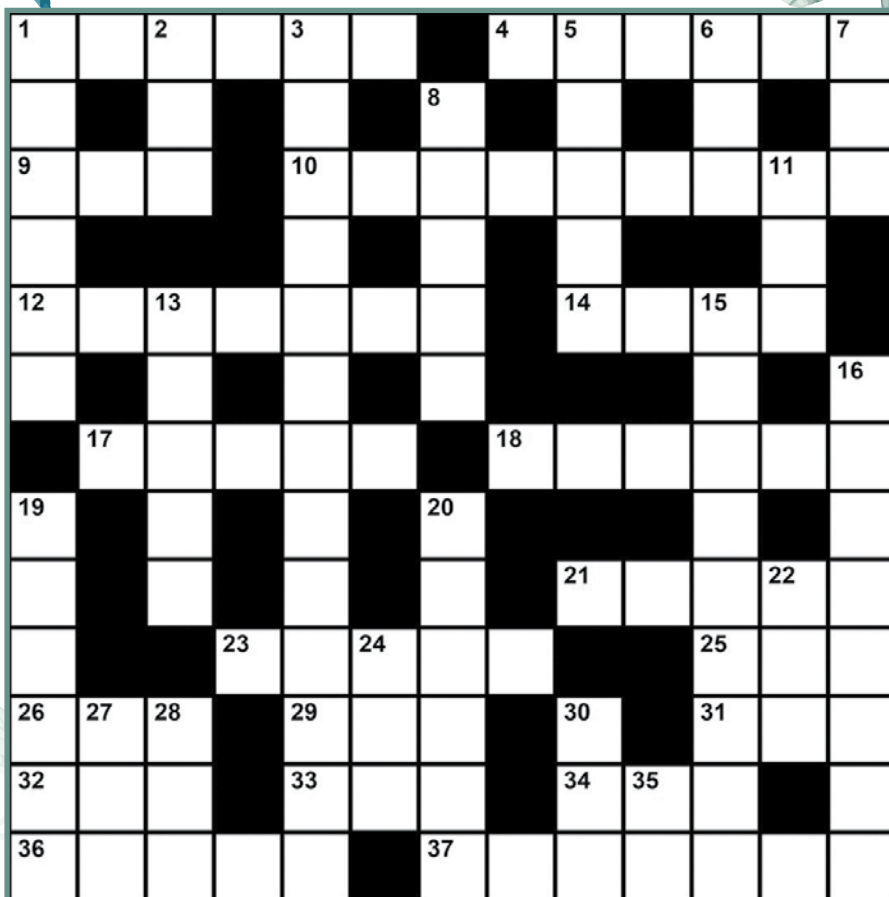
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Crossword PUZZLE

BY MYLES MELLOR

Across

1. Magnificent tree that blossoms in spring
4. Spring garden displays
9. Mighty woodland giant tree
10. Spring butterfly that is white with colorful tips to its wings, 2 words
12. Takes out some weeds, perhaps
14. Domesticated
17. Romantic flowers
18. Park protector
21. Round shape formed by a series of concentric circles as formed by leaves or flower petals
23. Oregon ____: plant that has bright yellow flowers
25. Digital age chuckle, abbr.

26. Small garden songbird
29. "_____ on the Spring" by Thomas Gray
31. Third in sequence
32. Wedding vow words
33. Neither's partner
34. Balance sheet expert, abbr.
36. Beautiful purple flowers that grow in the wild
37. Produce flowers

Down

1. Spring flowering bulb which produces many different varieties of color
2. Majestic mountain deer
3. Large shrubs with many flowers that burst into color in spring
5. Sun's output
6. Away from home
7. Tree's vital fluid

8. Flower that is white with a yellow center
11. Winter pond coating that melts in spring
13. Spanish wine
15. Trees with tulip shaped white/pink blossoms that bloom in spring
16. Three-petaled wildflower which can produce white, red, purple, pink and yellow flowers
19. Strikingly unusual, like many orchids
20. Magnificent
22. French for king
24. Commotion
27. Boise's state, abbr.
28. Male turkey
30. Environmentally friendly prefix
35. Intro to a letter addition

Answers on page 38



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LOS ALTOS FLOWER FARM

— YOUTUBE CHANNEL RECEIVES —

AWARDS



By Grace Lin

Town Crier Editorial Intern

A local flower farm has been recognized for instructional videos its co-owner created for the farm's YouTube channel, winning two awards earlier this year.

Los Altos-based Turbow Farms in March garnered a pair of TASTE Awards, handed out annually to the makers of online content in a variety of categories, including food, fashion and lifestyle. Known for its specialty-cut flowers, Turbow Farms won for Best Instructional Web Series and Best Filmed at Home Episodes or Film (The Ale Gambini Award).

"I was actually really shocked and overwhelmed," said Charmaine Turbow, who runs the farm with husband Dan.

Charmaine added that she was

especially touched to receive the award named after the late Gambini.

"She was somebody who's seen as the queen of cooking and was quite celebrated as a chef," Charmaine said. "To carry that honor of someone who fought with pancreatic cancer, and to carry on her legacy is very meaningful. She was all about cooking and food, so for it to shift to something like farming and gardening, makes me feel very honored, to say the least, that they chose us."

Charmaine launched Turbow Farm's YouTube channel three years ago and this year was nominated for the TASTE Awards for the first time. The nominations came from Kim Ocampo, creative director of Emotional Content Productions,

which edits most of the farm's videos.

"We started the channel as a way of sharing and showcasing what we do here on the farm and what we're growing," Charmaine said. "It was more of creating a library of content that people could just refer back to."

Most of the Turbow Farms videos are similar to Charmaine's workshops at the farm. These workshops include floral design, garden care and flower growing.

"My biggest thing that I wanted with the Youtube channel was to make things approachable and to allow people who don't necessarily have garden space to be able to enjoy and see what's capable within a small space," Charmaine said. "The channel has been great. It's created a beautiful, evergreen library and resource for people." →

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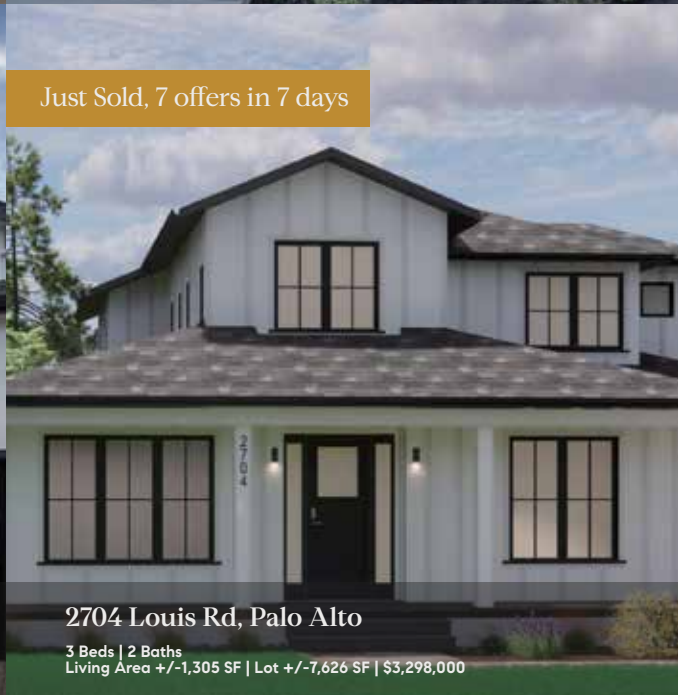
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“We started the channel as a way of sharing and showcasing what we do here on the farm and what we’re growing.”

– Charmaine Turbow,
Co-Owner,
Turbo Farms



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Charmaine Turbow launched her YouTube channel three years ago.
PHOTO BY EMOTIONAL CONTENT, COURTESY OF CHARMAINE TURBOW

While Charmaine said she considered turning her content into structured online lessons, she ultimately found more value in keeping it open and accessible.

“When it comes to filming for the videos, I would say 99% of it is filmed by my kids. We’re very grassroots,” Charmaine said. “... (My daughter) Kara is the main camera person. She’s actually pretty good with surveying the landscape, and she knows, just innately, what to zoom in on. She’s a natural when it comes to using the camera.”

Kara, 13, said she will do whatever it takes to get a good shot of her mom in action — including “crouch down in a flower bed ... to record it.”

There are some videos where Charmaine said she needs a script and teleprompter, but for the most part, the videos are improvised: She comes up with an idea, talks about it in front of the camera and finishes after one or two takes.

Charmaine has posted 159 videos on YouTube, accumulating nearly 140,000 total views. Turbow Farms’ channel has approximately 1,700 subscribers.

However, the numbers aren’t everything to Charmaine.

“The most rewarding part about this journey is that I’ve been able to do it with my family,” she said. “It can’t be done without them.”

Daughter Lauren, Kara’s twin sister, is elated to see her mom being rewarded for her efforts.

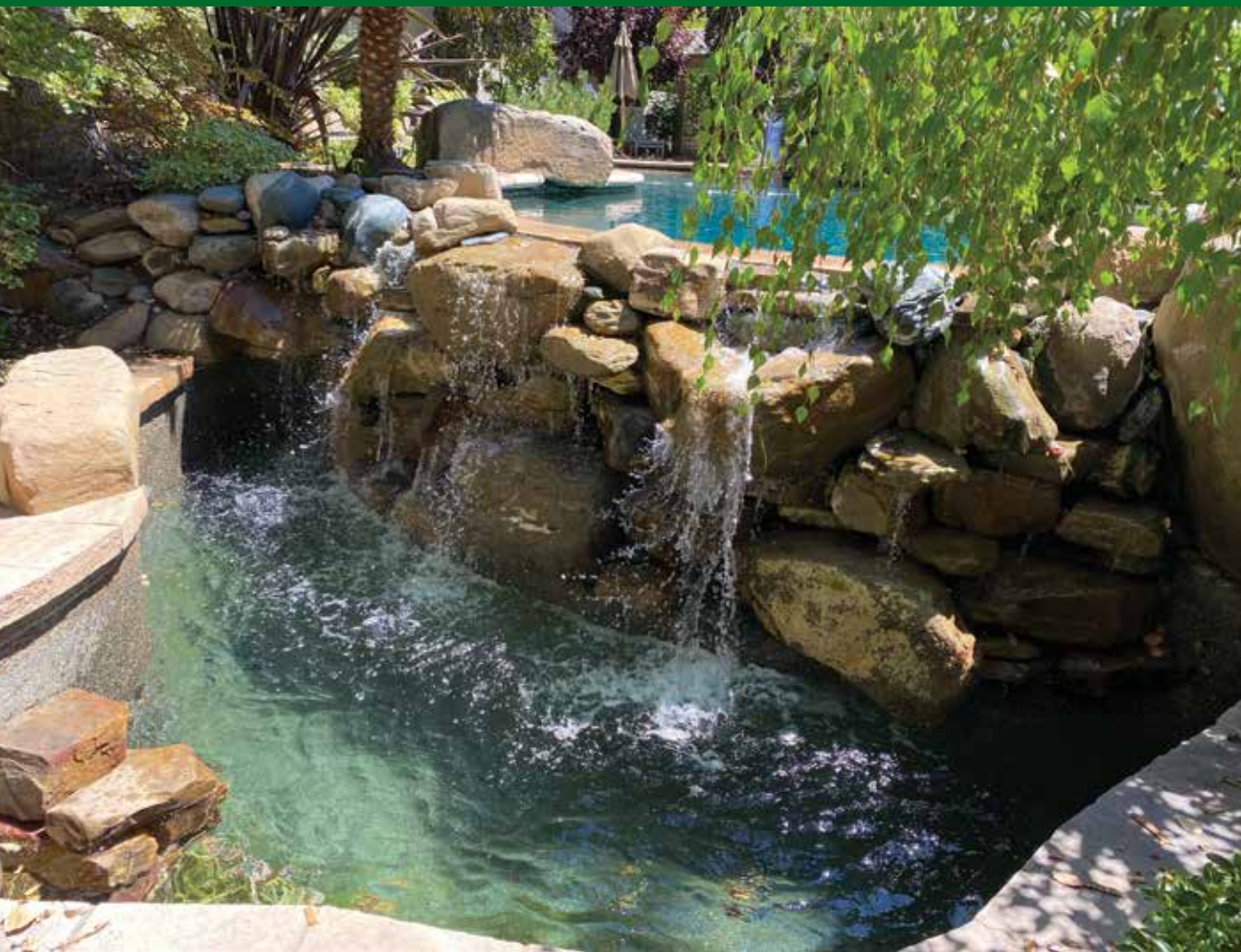
“(The two awards) make me feel really proud of my mom,” she said. “She’s getting recognized for all the work she’s put into the farm.”

To watch Turbow Farms’ videos on YouTube, visit youtube.com/@turbowfarms. For more information on the farm, visit turbowfarms.com.

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How To Get Perfect Paint Lines Every Time:

5 Pro Tips for Clean Edges

Statepoint

Spring is prime time for home painting projects – from refreshing walls to tackling trim, doors and cabinets. While a new coat of paint can transform a room, the difference between professional-looking results and a frustrating DIY experience can come down to one detail: clean, crisp edges.

Paint bleed, uneven lines and messy corners are some of the most common challenges homeowners face – but they're also avoidable. Here are five science-backed tips to make your spring painting projects look like they were done by a pro.

1. Understand why paint bleeds

If you've ever removed painter's tape and found uneven lines underneath, you're not alone. Paint bleed happens when liquid paint slips into tiny gaps between the tape and the surface – a common issue on textured walls, wood and trim. Even if the tape looks firmly in place, small imperfections can allow paint to creep underneath, resulting in jagged edges.

The good news? Once you understand what causes paint to bleed, it's much easier to prevent it – and get the results you want. →

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2. Block paint bleed before it starts

The secret to sharp paint edges isn't just technique – it's using the proper tool for the task. Premium performance painter's tapes, like FrogTape, do more than just stick to the surface. Its PaintBlock Technology is a super-absorbent polymer that reacts with the water in latex paint to form a micro-barrier along the tape's edge. This creates a gel-like seal that helps block paint from seeping underneath – preventing paint bleed before it even starts.

Similar super-absorbent technology has been used for years in everyday products (like baby diapers), where locking in moisture is key. Here, it's what helps keep your paint lines clean and precise.

3. Match the tape to your surface

Don't use the same tape for every project. One of the most effective ways to get sharp paint lines is to pick the perfect tape for the unique surface you're working on to ensure a strong

seal. Here are two options to choose from to help achieve better results, reduce touch-ups and protect surfaces:

- Multi-surface painter's tape: Perfect for wood trim, glass, metal and walls, where a stronger hold helps create crisp lines
- Delicate surface painter's tape: Designed for use on freshly painted surfaces, wallpaper or decorative projects where you need lower adhesion to prevent surface damage

4. Use tape that bends without breaking

For challenging contours or curves, like arched doorways or mantels, high-quality material matters. An ultra-premium painter's tape, like FrogTape Advanced Painter's Tape, offers elevated performance when it comes to super sharp paint lines. The tape's thin, yet strong washi paper backing is two times stronger than traditional crepe paper painter's tape, allowing the tape to lay flat and bend around curves, so it peels off in one clean piece rather than shredding and leaving residue behind.

5. Remove tape at the right time and angle

Even the best taping technique can fall short if removal isn't done correctly. For the cleanest lines, remove tape slowly at a 45-degree angle while the paint is still slightly wet.

If the paint fully dries, it can form a bond between the tape and the surface. When the tape is pulled away, that bond may cause chipping or uneven edges – undoing the crisp lines you've worked to achieve.

By combining the right approach and tape, with proper application and careful removal, you can consistently achieve sharp-looking paint lines on every project. 🛠️





LOS ALTOS HILLS
COUNTY FIRE
DISTRICT

FREE CLASSES TO REDUCE FIRE DANGER AT HOME



Photo: Fire Safe Marin

6/13

Fire Smart Landscaping

June 13, 10:00AM – 12:00PM, Online

Learn to landscape with native plants while maintaining defensible space.

Presented by Nikki Hanson of CA Sisters Landscaping and Fire Captain Paige Russell (ret.)

7/25

Home Hardening and Zone 0

July 25, 10:00AM – 12:00PM, Los Altos Hills Town Hall

Learn home hardening and Zone 0 strategies to reduce wildfire risk.

Presented by Fire Captain Paige Russell (ret.)

Register at [lahcfd.org/classes](https://www.lahcfd.org/classes)

Join a Firewise Community

By participating in Firewise USA®, residents are being proactive in safeguarding their homes, strengthening neighborhood connections, and creating a fire-adapted community.



FIREWISE USA®
Residents Reducing Wildfire Risks

Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Assessment & Rebate Program

Research shows that a home's vulnerability depends on its condition and everything within 100 feet of its foundation, the area known as the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ). The District offers a HIZ Assessment & Rebate Program to help residents create defensible space and harden their homes.



LOS ALTOS HILLS
COUNTY FIRE
DISTRICT

For local District events and programs, fire safety and emergency preparedness information, visit Los Altos Hills County Fire District at www.lahcfd.org, call (650) 949-1044 or email education@lahcfd.org.



Backyard Paradise

Tips for Transforming a Patio, Balcony or Deck Into an Outdoor Oasis

By Melinda Myers

You don't need much space to create a bit of paradise on your balcony, patio or deck. Fill the space with a collection of plants that provide texture, color and privacy. Then add comfortable seating, a fountain and lighting for additional ambiance and relaxation.

Start by evaluating the space you want to transform and how the surrounding views and noise will impact your enjoyment. Before enclosing the whole space, identify the views you need to screen and those you want to keep. Perhaps a view of your favorite flower garden, the park across the street or your neighbor's water feature extends your enjoyment beyond the limits of your garden oasis.

Use tall grasses, large tropical plants, vines trained on trellises and upright shrubs and trees to define the space. These can be grown in weather-proof containers if no in-ground planting space is available. Just make sure your balcony or deck can handle the weight of the planters once filled with soil and plants.

Select plants that provide multiple benefits. Look for plants that deliver several seasons of beauty with flowers, colorful foliage, seedheads and fall color. Include fragrant plants for aromatherapy and those that attract butterflies and hummingbirds to add motion and color.

Decide how you plan to use the space. Are you longing for a quiet area

to relax and read, one to entertain or a space to accommodate all your outdoor activities? Select furnishings with the color, form and style that will create your desired look and feel. Then select plants, containers and accessories that complement the furnishings for your outdoor oasis.

Add a stand-alone or wall-mounted fountain or container water garden to the space. The sound of moving water helps create a sense of peace and relaxation, calming the mind, reviving the spirit and masking noise pollution.

No need to worry about mosquitoes taking residency in your water feature. Moving water is less appealing and adding an organic product like Summit Mosquito Dunks to water features →

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prevents mosquitoes from breeding there. Just toss this donut-shaped cake of *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bti) into the water. This naturally occurring bacteria only kills the mosquito larvae but doesn't harm people, pets, fish or wildlife.

Further reduce mosquito problems by lighting a few citronella candles and placing them near you and others enjoying the space. Use a fan to help keep you cool and the weak-flying mosquitoes away.

Extend your enjoyment into the

evening with some lighting. Be mindful of birds and night-flying insects by using shields to point light down to the ground instead of into the night sky. Select lights with lower lumens that aren't as bright but still provide sufficient light and ambiance for you. Avoid white and blue light and opt for amber and yellow greens that are less disruptive to the birds and night-flying pollinators.

Like any decorating or gardening project, be ready to make needed adjustments. While fine-tuning your design, be sure to take time to relax and enjoy your new space.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books and hosts the nationally syndicated Melinda's Garden Moment radio program. For more information, visit MelindaMyers.com.



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