

Celebrating Island Living

Alameda

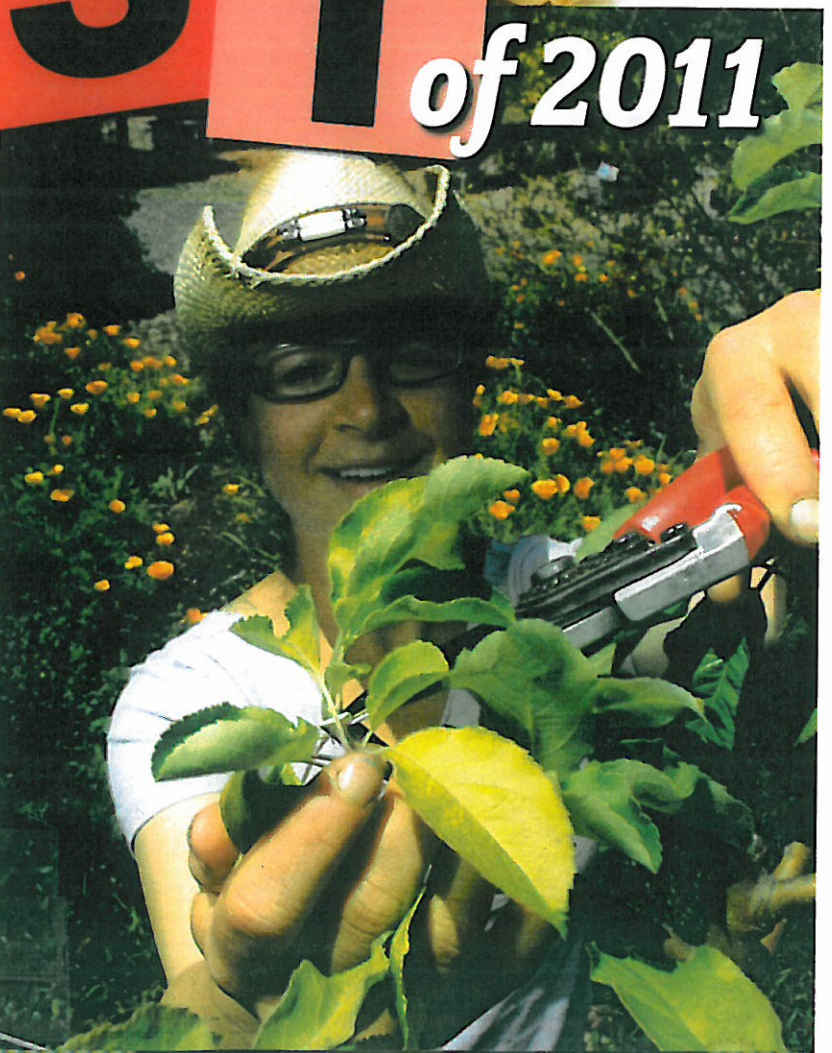
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The

BEST

of 2011



JULY 2011



EDITORS' CHOICE

Most Earth-Friendly Nursery Ploughshares Nursery

Gardening would seem inherently earth-friendly. But of course there's a big difference between pesticide-laden, water-hungry English gardens and the sort of drought-tolerant, Bay-friendly, native landscaping that has taken root in the East Bay. Alameda's Ploughshares Nursery has made its name promoting the latter. The nonprofit nursery runs its 3-acre site at Alameda Point on solar power, uses recycled potting and construction materials whenever possible, accepts and reuses donations of yard waste, mulches with tree trimmings from local companies, and grows everything organically. Ploughshares also provides job training, educational gardening workshops and features a helpful native-plant demonstration garden. Obliging staff will aid you in deciding from among the choices from an eco-conscious standpoint so you can't go wrong. — NATE SELTENRICH

Ploughshares Nursery, 2701 Main St.,
(510) 755-1102, www.ploughsharesnursery.com



EDITORS' CHOICE

Best Play Date for Your Inner Artist Frank Bette Center for the Arts

Tired of the everyday grind? Take a well-deserved break and dust off that sketchbook, start scribbling poetry, unbox that novel manuscript and let your inner artist out at the Frank Bette Center for the Arts. The center offers something for everyone — from life drawing sessions every Tuesday evening, to the youth poetry slam once a month, to more structured classes that run the gamut from writing to painting to photography. What sounds like more fun than taking “Visual Storytelling—Ancestral Roots,” “Drawing Dynamics,” or “Swag 101”? You can also just browse the gallery and get inspired by works from local and not-so-local artists. The exhibits are continually changing, and the center is always seeking new artists with interesting perspectives in all media from paintings to textiles to metalwork. Check out the Endless Call for Art and take the opportunity to submit your own work for one of the upcoming exhibits like “The Circle” (Oct. 7–Dec. 23), or handmade gifts for the Holiday Boutique. — DAWN ADAMS

Frank Bette Center for the Arts,
1601 Paru St., (510) 523-6957,
www.frankbettecenter.org

EDITORS' CHOICE

Best Place to Get a Fab Outfit Cheap All the More to Love

This stylish consignment store used to carry only plus sizes. But a few years back, former owner Jenny Matteucci moved the store to Encinal Avenue and expanded the selection to include sizes 6, 8 and 10. Janie Chew, the current owner, bought the shop in 2008 and still maintains a boutique where women of all shapes and sizes can find high-quality, gently-used clothing, shoes, bags, scarves and jewelry at consignment-store prices. The dressing rooms are ample and the mood is always friendly. Extra bonus: If you're not sure what to wear to an event or what kind of shirt to wear with those pale green silk pants you picked up, either Chew or her staffers are happy to weigh in. — SUSAN E. DAVIS

All the More to Love, 1910 A Encinal Ave., (510) 521-6206. www.allthemoretolove.com

EDITORS' CHOICE

Best Place to Get a Ping-Pong Education Alameda Table Tennis Club

Have a yen to re-create the key, hilarious scene in the ping-pong comedy *Balls of Fury* when Randy Daytona faces off against Chinatown's greatest weapon, the Dragon (née a little pony-tailed girl in pink)? Intrigued by table tennis' sudden rise on cool barometers (witness last year's London-wide streetside ping-pong challenge as socialites and hipsters faced off at the Serpentine Gallery)? Or simply dying to revisit the sport of carefree youth? This unsung gem of a table tennis club is just the place to do it, and to get some serious practice with vets, aficionados or rising young stars on the regional circuit. Housed in a well-lit gym with pro tables, the club gives you the chance, for the low door price of \$5, to get trounced by a 10-year-old — or a 70-year-old. That's the beauty of the game. And when you get the fire in your belly to start winning, there's plenty of expert coaching, as well as training camps led by internationally recognized players, on hand to hone that killer backhand. —KIMBERLY CHUN

Alameda Table Tennis Club, 2050 Lincoln Ave., (415) 287-0352
www.alamedattc.org



Robles-Wong Family

EDITORS' CHOICE

Most Courageous Families to Fight for Public Education Funding Equality Robles-Wong, et al. Plaintiffs

In May 2010, four Alameda families took center stage in a historic lawsuit that challenges the constitutionality of state education funding. *Robles-Wong, et al. v. State of California* pits the four — Michael and Martha Robles-Wong, Robert and Mialisa Bonta, Susan Davis and Peter Brand and Robert Siltanen and Beth Meyer — against a state funding system that has sunk to 49th in the nation, with low test scores to match. If the suit, which includes a total of 27 families as plaintiffs, is victorious, the Legislature would be forced to devise a new way to pay for schools. Encinal High School civics teacher and plaintiff Rob Siltanen would like nothing better. "The system is so bad it deprives students of their constitutional right to an education," he says. All four families believe it is their responsibility to work for better schools for all children. "It's important to be an active citizen, help others and try to fix what's broken," Siltanen says. —ANN LESLIE DAVIS



Alameda Point Collaborative



EDITORS' CHOICE

Best Place to Observe the Real Pecking Order in Alameda

Alameda Point Collaborative

Forget City Council meetings or various functions involving Old Alameda. If you want to observe blatant power structures, check out the chicken coop at Alameda Point Collaborative. Part of the Growing Youth Project, which is teaching low-income teens the skills needed to grow and advocate for healthy food in their community, the coop (which was built with the help of volunteers from Clif Bar) currently houses 40 hens, who produce eggs that APC uses for its weekly breakfasts as well as sells to local restaurants. Hens aren't kidding about their hierarchies — they really do peck, scratch and screech at each other to create and maintain power structures. But when it shifts (as when a new hen is introduced or an established one dies), feathers get ruffled, dust flies and then they figure out a new way to live together. Kind of like politics on our dear sweet island. You can watch the show on Saturdays when the APC farm is open to the public. Or call ahead to request a tour. —SUSAN E. DAVIS

Alameda Point Collaborative, 677 W. Ranger Ave., (510) 898-7800
www.apcollaborative.org