

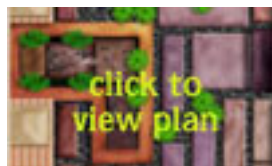
# BACKYARD BLITZ

## Steps to Style



Mark and Lindi Greenfield are a typical young couple who have recently bought their first home and are relying on family and friends to help them with renovations. Mark's twin brother Andrew sought the help of the Backyard Blitz team as he could not see the garden being improved any other way.

Landscape designer and Blitz presenter Jamie Durie, has devised a spectacular, contemporary makeover for this small garden. A new timber staircase leads from the rear balcony down onto bluestone stepping stones. Beyond newly erected timber screens a sunken garden with a bluestone water feature is the centrepiece. A perimeter of timber seating beneath flowering cherry plums creates a valuable entertaining area. Sparse plantings of groundcovers and a shiny black pebble mulch completes this distinctive design with a Japanese feel.



## Adapting this plan to your garden

Make a detailed scale drawing of your backyard (eg 1:100) showing the location of the house or main buildings and other major features. Then incorporate the desired elements from our makeover. As your backyard will be a different size, you will need to estimate the amounts of materials you will require.

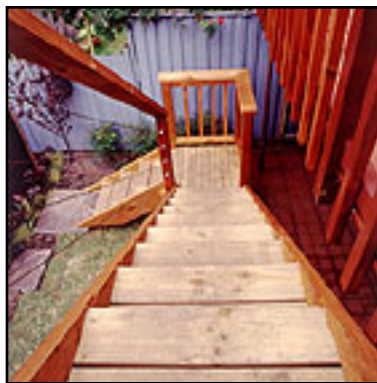
**Note:** on your plan show the locations of any services (water pipes, sewerage, power, phone, etc) so you can avoid damaging them during the makeover.

Permits and approval: many structures in the backyard require council approval as they can have an impact on your neighbours. For example new stairs can overlook neighbours if not designed properly. Always discuss your plans with your local council and neighbours before commencing building in the backyard.

## Materials

**Stairs:** a large staircase from a second floor verandah was built to give access to the garden. Timber stairs require complicated carpentry knowledge and skills to construct. If you are a competent home handyman and want to attempt construction of a flight of timber stairs, having stringers and treads pre-cut will make construction easier. We also recommend speaking to the building department in your local council about permits and restrictions and also seek independent engineering advice.

Stringers and treads cut to size cost about \$1400 for stairs of this type.



Two posts (H4, 4200x90x90mm) concreted into the ground provide the height from the ground to balcony; treated pine stringers (300x50mm) take two rebated treads (150x50mm). Two landings provide turning areas within the staircase and are created using bearers (150x50mm), joists (100x50mm) and decking boards (90x20mm). All timbers are held in place with galvanised cup-head bolts or stainless steel spiral shanked nails. Stringers are given additional stability with booker rods (also sold as threaded rod) at two metre centres. A top hand rail nailed into the posts and stainless steel wire threaded between the posts provides a balustrade between the treads and handrail. **Blitz Tipz** Scott Cam used a router to cut the house outs in the stringers for the step treads. If you don't have a router, use a circular saw to make about five cuts next to each other, then clean out the cut area with a chisel.

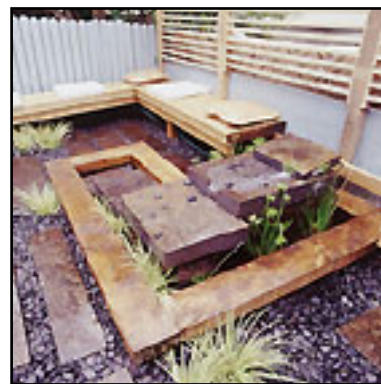
**Stepping stones:** large bluestone pieces (natural split face, 60mm thick) were used as stepping stones. As they are extremely heavy, some of the largest pieces have been sawn down the middle and then butt jointed when laid over a 4:1 mortar mix. **Blitz Tipz** The apparent random placement of

these pieces has actually been carefully designed to allow easy access to the seating, water feature and barbecue. Ensure your design is functional as well as funky with careful planning.

**Bench seats:** simple timber frames covered with decking boards create a stylish and effective seating area. Posts (H4, 90x90mm), bearers (150x50mm) and joists (75x50mm) provide the framework, while decking boards (90x20mm) provide the seat and fascia. Stainless steel nails are used throughout, with posts installed inground in concrete. **Blitz Tipz** Use an indoor chair as a template when designing benches such as these. The floor to seat height and seat depth need to be similar to a normal chair to be comfortable.

**Screens:** before starting work on the construction of fences or privacy screens on your boundary, check with your local council to find out about requirements in your area.

In the garden horizontal screens allow partial views through to the lower garden and divided the garden into two distinct rooms. The same screens were repeated along the back boundary. The long posts that support these screens also support the bench seats. The posts rise 1600mm above ground. Decking boards (90x20mm) spaced 55mm apart were attached horizontally with a nail gun to create a simple but effective barrier. The existing fences were painted with an exterior acrylic paint from Murobond called 'Fir' while the screens were painted with a deep aubergine colour Wattyl Solarguard acrylic paint mixed to our specifications.



**Blitz Tipz** A variety of screen styles can be achieved by using different timber dimensions and profiles. Check the timber section at the hardware for inspiration for your own design.

**Water feature:** Jamie excavated to a depth of about 600mm to create the space for the water feature. The excavated area was then reinforced with treated pine sleepers (H4 for inground use, 2400x200x100mm) and lined with a heavy duty butyl rubber pond liner. Sleepers have been laid over a layer of compacted road base (100mm) to provide a frame. Each sleeper end is overlapped and nailed together. A 100mm layer of paving sand spread within the frame supports the pond liner and reduces the likelihood of it being punctured. A capping row of treated pine sleepers (2400x200x75mm) nailed into the stacked sleepers beneath holds the pond liner in place.

A tiered concrete block pier supports large bluestone slabs (100mm thick). Additional squares of pond liner were laid beneath the blocks for added protection. Grooves carved into the surface of the top stone in the cascade directed the flow of water. The lower stones were left smooth.

A low voltage submersible pump (Pumpmaster 4200) connected to a low voltage transformer recirculates water from the pond to the top of the bluestone cascade. Water plants provide a softening effect to this formal feature. **Blitz Tipz** The sound of water is an attractive element in most water

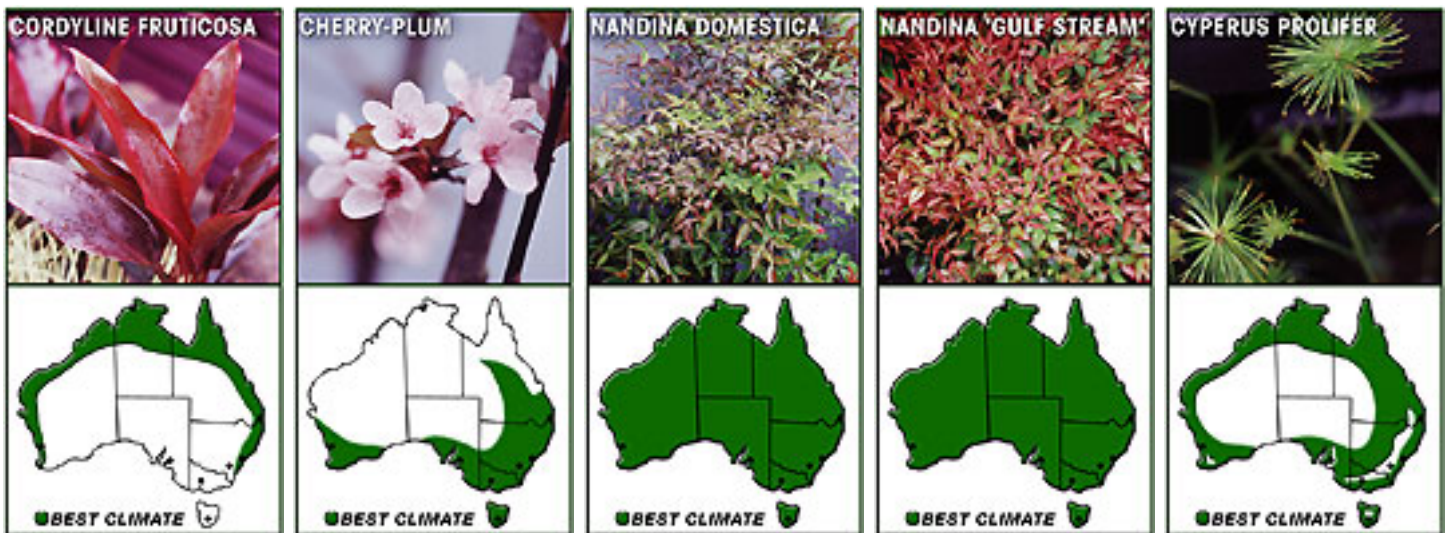


features. Make sure the pump you select is large enough to move a sufficient volume of water to make some noise.

**Garden beds:** an organic garden mix was incorporated into planting holes and shiny black pebbles (40mm) were used as a decorative mulch.

**Painted finishes:** exterior acrylic paints from Murobond and Watty Solarguard were used on the timber screens and fences. Timber screens have been painted with an aubergine colour mixed to our specifications (Watty Solarguard 'Indian Red' plus two cups of black tint), boundary fences were painted with Murobond 'Fir' while the seats were finished with a timber decking stain from Watty Solarguard.

## Plants



**Trees:** cherry plum (*Prunus cerasifera* 'Nigra')

**Shrubs and accent plants:** acorus (*Acorus gramineus* 'Ogon'), sacred bamboo (*Nandina domestica* and 'Gulf Stream'), cordyline (*Cordyline fruticosa* 'Rubra')

**Water plants:** dwarf papyrus (*Cyperus proliifer*)

**Turf:** soft-leaf buffalo ('Palmetto')

## Cost and availability

We used some mature plants in our makeover to create an instant effect for television. As a result, our total cost of plants and materials was \$10,284. This cost could be reduced to \$9083 by using smaller plants.

## Product details

- Large bluestone sawn blocks were sourced from Silex Quarries near Canberra. Natural split bluestone costs from \$100 per square metre. Phone: (02) 6230 9266 for availability and prices.
- Black pebbles came from Gardening House Decor in Melbourne. Phone: (03) 9318 1588 for details as they supply some interstate outlets.
- The stylish Big Green Egg Barbecue is available at Barbeques Galore outlets throughout

Australia. It costs around \$900.

- Pond parts are sourced from Contour ponds in Sydney. Phone: (02) 9690 2600 or check your local *Yellow Pages* under 'Pools and Ponds'.
- Most of the plants we used are readily available at nurseries or ask your nursery to order them for you or advise similar varieties suited to your area. You may need to contact specialist nurseries for some plants. Your local nursery should be able to provide contacts to you.
- Most other materials are available from large hardware stores, building or landscape suppliers. Paints are available from hardware stores and specialist paint shops.
- All tools used are commonly available for hire including the turf cutter and nail gun.

## Getaway details

Accommodation:

Milton Park

Hordern's Road

Bowral NSW 2576

Phone: (02) 4861 1522

## Acknowledgments

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Construction by the Backyard Blitz team (all gardens are a gift from Backyard Blitz).

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