

BACKYARD BLITZ

Father of the Year



Chris Thompson is the Backyard Blitz 'Father of the Year'. And what a father he is - to nine children. Chris and his wife Sharon have never been on a holiday so when we offered them a family holiday or a secluded getaway for just Chris and Sharon, Sharon jumped at the latter and the chance for some peace and quiet. Having moved three times to accommodate their growing family, the Thompsons finally landed in this new home on an acre with no garden. The Backyard Blitz team battled awful conditions to create an oasis for this incredible family and had a lot of fun along the way.

Design intent

This newly established home has been built on a concrete slab beneath a 1m high retaining wall. Landscape designer Jim Fogarty has created interest in this flat area by providing changes in level, texture and colour through a variety of structures and materials. Large format pavers lead to a raised deck surrounded with interesting foliage textures and shapes. Small unit pavers flow from the deck toward some new steps, a lawn area and a raised planter bed.



Design ideas

Level changes are a great tool in the garden as they provide the opportunity to appreciate the garden from a different perspective. Create level changes in combination with material changes to add another dimension to your garden.

Adapting this plan to your garden

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

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 approvals: Coordinating material delivery times and finding a location to store them requires careful planning. If you need to store materials on the roadway for a short time make sure they cannot travel into the stormwater system. Hay bales, stormwater pipes and bunding are all available at the local hardware and will help to prevent materials from fouling local creeks.

Getting started

A bobcat was used to excavate the site and to drill holes for the decking posts. Heavy materials like roadbase and paving sand were brought in and stockpiled.

Garden elements



Deck: Scotty built a great new entertaining deck adjacent to the house. Treated pine posts (90x90mm) installed vertically in ground in quick setting concrete support treated pine bearers (140x45mm) bolted to the posts with galvanised cup head bolts (10mm diameter, 150mm long). Joists (90x45mm) skew-nailed to the top of bearers accommodate 90mm wide treated pine decking boards laid perpendicular to the joists and connected with spiral shanked, cup head stainless steel nails (65mm). The underside of the deck was concealed with a decking board nailed horizontally to the face of the posts.
Blitz Tipz: Space joists at 450mm centres when laying 90mm wide decking boards. If you are laying 70mm wide decking boards space joists at 400mm centres.



Paving: Nigel laid two areas of paving to lead from the house to the deck and from the deck to the rest of the garden. Large format pavers (Riverstone - Marigold) laid over a sub-grade of compacted road base and bedding sand provide a link from the rear of the house to the new deck. Clay pavers from CSR-PGH were used to create the free-form shape from the deck to the remainder of the garden. Kiln-dried grouting sand swept through the gaps between the pavers helps to lock them in place and a concrete haunch around the perimeter of the job holds the bedding sand in place. **Blitz Tipz:** When laying large curved areas it is often simplest to pave beyond the finished edge of the job. Mark the curve onto the face of the pavers, cut them to size, relay and fit the header course around the curve.

Sleeper steps and garden bed: Jamie used recycled hardwood sleepers to create some steps and a feature garden bed. Steps can become a feature in themselves if the scale and position is carefully considered. With this in mind, Jamie built his steps to be 2000mm wide, with a riser of 180mm and a tread of 380mm. These generously proportioned steps will encourage visitors to view the garden from the lawn above and provide a link between the new lower garden and the area yet to be developed above it.



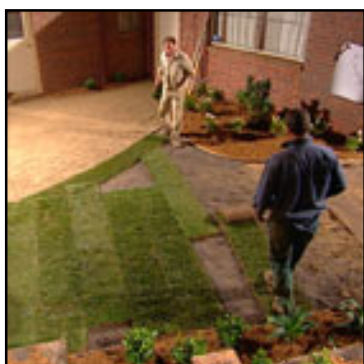
A new raised garden bed constructed with recycled hardwood sleepers adds another dimension to the garden and houses a small scale water feature. Sleepers stacked on edge on a compacted roadbase footing were connected with galvanised sleeper spikes. The rear of the sleepers was connected to the existing retaining wall to prevent overturning. Backfilled with an organic garden mix and planted out by Jody, the new garden bed provides another point of interest in the lower garden



Water feature: Jamie installed a small self-contained water feature into the newly constructed raised garden bed. Water features in a range of styles and sizes to suit all tastes and budgets are available from most good garden centres these days. This small unit is run on low voltage power and a small (500l/hr) submersible pump. **Blitz Tipz:** Always buy a low-voltage model to reduce the risk of electrocution by severing cabling in the garden. Alternatively, have a licensed electrician install an outdoor power point so that the power source is adjacent to the water feature



Garden beds: Jody improved the site soil texture and nutrition levels by incorporating an organic garden mix throughout the new planting areas. A layer of Eucalyptus mulch spread to a depth of 75mm will help to suppress weeds and maintain soil temperature and moisture content. **Blitz Tipz:** Visit your local landscape supplier to view their range of mulches. Most suppliers will provide you with small sample bags of the types you like, so you can check their texture and colour in your own garden.



Turf: the existing clay site soil become spongy as a result of constant foot and machinery traffic. Jamie added coarse washed river sand to the affected area before spreading turf underlay to a depth of 100mm. Turf underlay is typically comprised of 80% sand and 20% black soil to enable adequate drainage and nutrition to be made available to the plant. **Blitz Tipz:** Hire a Level Lawn to make spreading turf underlay easier. Alternatively make your own by connecting a straight length of timber (90x45mm) to the back of a nail rake.

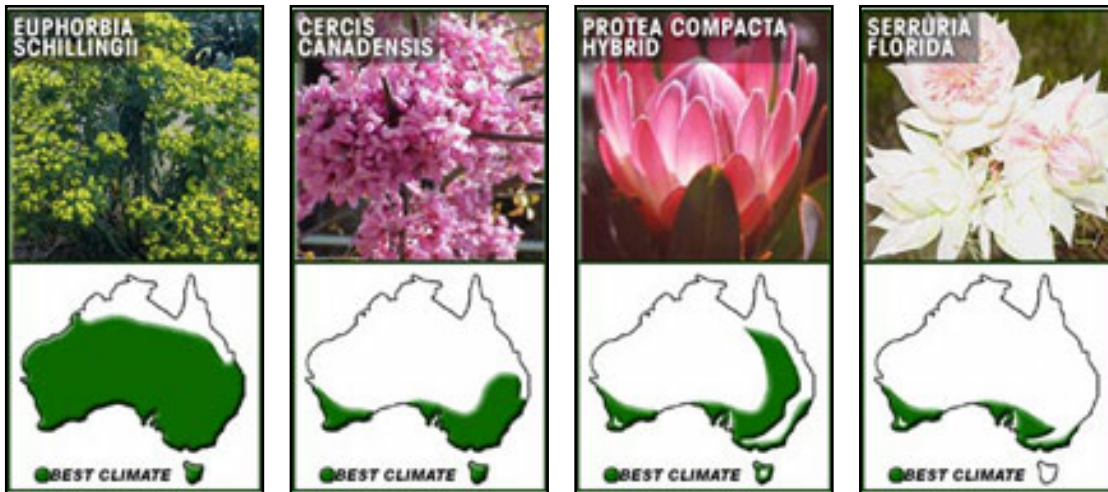
Plants

A selection of hardy and colourful ornamentals will provide colour and interest all year round in this garden.

Trees: cercis forest pansy (*Cercis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy')

Shrubs: gardenia (*Gardenia augusta* 'Gold Magic'), protea pink princess (*Protea compacta* hybrid 'Pink Princess'), lomandra (*Lomandra longifolia*), silver bush (*Convolvulus cneorum*), New Zealand rock lily (*Arthropodium cirratum*), escallonia 'Pink Pixie' (*Escallonia* 'Pink Pixie'), euphorbia (*Euphorbia schillingii*), blushing bride (*Serruria* 'Blushing Bride')

Turf: tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*)



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 \$13,962 . This cost could be reduced to \$10,688 by using smaller plants.

Product details

- The style of self-contained water feature we used is available at most good garden centres from about \$250 including the low voltage pump and transformer.
- Riverstone 'Marigold' pavers cost about \$65 per square metre. Call Riverstone on (03) 9587 4446 for more details.
- 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.
- All tools used are commonly available for hire including the mini loader and nail gun.



Getaway details

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Acknowledgments

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