

# BACKYARD BLITZ

## Peace Keeper



Annette and John Baird have had their hands full with a young family and John's work overseas as a peace keeper in the Solomon Islands as part of Australia's Peace Keeping Mission. Annette was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis 2 years ago but has single handedly raised their two girls while John was away.

Annette's friends thought she deserved a break and a special surprise so they wrote to the Backyard Blitz team to ask for some help with the backyard. The team got stuck into the garden and also contacted the Australian Protective Service to sneak John home for an early reunion.



### Design ideas

A secretive garden is always enticing to young children. Large foliated plants and winding paths provide little nooks and secret sitting spots for young imagination's to run wild.

### 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 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:** check with your local council regarding regulations about earthworks and drainage. If you are changing existing levels or installing drainage ensure no water run-off is directed toward neighbouring properties. Any water entering the stormwater system must be free from debris and sediment.

## Getting started

A full clear out was needed, so to make access for the machines, (mini excavator and bobcat) we removed some fence panels from two adjoining properties and drove through their backyards. Once the turf was all gone and final levels achieved the set out could begin.

## Garden elements

### Timber Deck

Scott created a split level deck leading from the rear of the house down into the new garden. Timbers treated with preservative were used in all parts of the deck. The posts (H4, 90x90mm) were installed in-ground using quick setting concrete. Support bearers (H3, 190x45mm) were nailed and bolted to the posts and the rear of the house to support the joists. The joists (H3, 90x45mm) were skew nailed to the top of the bearers. The decking boards (90x20mm) were spaced 3mm apart and nailed down using cup head, spiral shanked nails fired from a nail gun.

**Blitz Tipz:** Always treat any cut ends of treated pine with a preservative treatment before placing them in-ground.

**Stepping-stone pathway:** Nigel laid sandstone pieces (300x300mm) as stepping stones to lead from the rear deck down to the sunken garden. Sandstone pieces were laid on a mortar bed following a stringline to keep them straight. Washed clean with a sponge and water they provide an unobtrusive pathway in the new lawn.

**Blitz Tipz:** Nigel steps out the location of each stepping stone and then marks them on the ground prior to laying.

**Sleeper retaining wall:** A low timber retaining wall was constructed to create two level areas and to separate the new lawn area from the lower garden area. Treated pine sleepers (200x75x2400mm) were used as both posts and rails within the wall. Sleeper posts were installed vertically in concrete. Sleepers were laid on edge behind the posts and nailed in place with galvanised sleeper spikes (150x5.6mm). Each row was laid level with the next row laid on top and nailed in place. As this was a low retaining wall on a site with sandy soil it was not necessary to install additional drainage.

**Blitz Tipz:** Any retaining wall more than 1000mm high should be designed by a structural engineer and constructed by a qualified landscaper or builder.

**Water feature:** Jamie installed a Balinese inspired water feature as part of the deck and as a focal point in the garden. A pre-fabricated fibreglass pond shell was supported within a timber frame to bring the water level up to the deck. A Palaman stone plinth and bowl form the centre piece of the feature with water cascading from the bowl into the pond below. A low voltage submersible pump recirculates the water and provides the refreshing sound of running water in the garden.

**Blitz Tipz:** Always use a low voltage pump in your residential water features as the pump size is usually sufficient and it is far safer and cheaper to install than 240 volt pumps.

**Turf:** We laid Palmetto, a type of soft leaf Buffalo, over 75mm of layer turf underlay soil mix. Prior to laying the rolls of turf, the soil was levelled and made firm.

**Blitz Tipz:** Stagger the joints of the turf and lay the rolls across the slope rather than along the slope.

## Plants

The aim of the planting in this garden was to create an air of mystery and to encourage the imagination of the two young girls who use the garden for play. Big, bold foliage and contrasting colours will help the girls feel they are in their own world.

**Trees:** Natal flame bush (*Alberta magna*), native frangipani (*Hymenosporum flavum*).

**Ferns:** Birds-nest fern (*Asplenium australasicum*), soft tree fern (*Dicksonia antarctica*).

**Shrubs:** fatsia (*Fatsia japonica*), cordyline 'Negra' (*Cordyline 'Negra'*), cordyline Rubra (*Cordyline fruticosa 'Rubra'*)

**Perennials:** dianella 'Border Silver' (*Dianella 'Border Silver'*), clivia (*Clivia* Belgian Hybrids group), knobby club-rush (*Isolepis nodosa*), stream lily (*Helmholtzia glaberrima*), crinum lily (*Crinum pedunculatum*), ctenanthe (*Ctenanthe 'Silver Star'*), vriesea (*Vriesea 'Splenet'*).

**Ground covers:** ajuga (*Ajuga reptans 'Purpurea'*).



## Cost and availability

We used mature plants in our makeover to create an instant effect for television. As a result, our total cost for plants and materials was \$11,063. The use of smaller plants would have reduced the cost to \$8696.

## Product details

- Water feature components were sourced from Contour Ponds and Pumps in Sydney. Phone (02) 9690 2600 for more details on their range of products.
- Palaman stone water features cost \$350 from the Vast Interior in Sydney. Phone (02) 9999-2355 for more information.
- Most of the plants we used are readily available at, or can be ordered from nurseries. Nurseries can also advise on similar varieties suited to your area. You may need to contact specialist nurseries for some plants. Your local nursery should be able to provide you with contacts.
- Most other materials are available from large hardware stores, building or landscape suppliers.

## Getaway details

### Accommodation:

Cypress Lakes Resort  
Cnr McDonalds & Thompsons Rd  
Pokolbin, NSW  
Phone: 1800 061 818  
Web: [www.cypresslakes.com.au](http://www.cypresslakes.com.au)

The Golden Door Resort Spa  
Cypress Lakes Resort  
Cnr McDonalds and Thompson Roads  
Pokolbin NSW 2320  
Phone: 61 2 4993 1400  
Web: [www.goldendoor.com.au](http://www.goldendoor.com.au)

Roberts at Pepper Tree  
Halls Rd  
Pokolbin, NSW  
Phone: (02) 4998 7330

### Acknowledgements

Design by Greg Bell from Stepping Stone Design.  
Construction by the Backyard Blitz team (all gardens are gifts from Backyard Blitz).

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