

BACKYARD BLITZ

Big Smoke Blitz



When the Backyard Blitz team put out the call for a different backyard to make over, they never expected anything like Mick and Neridah Witt's place. Their backyard is in the heart of the Sydney CBD, 30 metres up in the air on the 7th floor of a city office block. Mick and Neridah have lived in the one-bedroom unit for five years, as part of their role as caretakers to the building. They now have two young boys with nowhere interesting to play, and in desperation they responded to our call.

Jamie and the team relished the challenge of coming up with a design that suits the space, for a limited budget. The greatest challenge was getting everything up onto the roof before the building of the garden could even start.



Design intent

Jamie Durie and his team at Patio have created a series of interlocking rooms within this massive rooftop space. Colour and form have been introduced with large timber cubes, which help to provide a sense of human scale without interrupting the magnificent views. Hardy plantings in raised rainwater tanks provide much-needed vegetation and a softening touch necessary in this harsh environment.

Design ideas

Try to think of your garden space in three dimensions at all times, much like your lounge room. Aim to treat the floors, walls and ceilings with either hard structures or soft plantings and you will have a much more inviting living space.

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, and 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: This makeover presented extreme access issues, which were solved with the help of professionals with the crane company, local council, Police, Roads and Traffic Authority and Sydney Buses. Always involve local authorities on your projects as they can help to smooth the way and may even save you money!

Getting started

Traffic controllers secured the street and directed traffic before the arrival of the crane. Lifting of all materials was undertaken under controlled conditions and the street was returned to normal traffic flow. The team commenced construction work early the next morning.

Garden elements

Garden cubes: Scott and Luke created some enormous timber cubes to act as rooms within the garden. Hardwood (150x150mm) slabs fixed together with specially fabricated galvanised brackets and coach screws (16mmx100mm) form the backbone of the garden. Each length of timber was attached to the next piece in-situ, as a completed cube weighs in excess of 400kg and cannot be easily moved once completed. Painted in bright colours from the Porters range of stonepaint, the cubes provide a dramatic framework for the rest of the garden as well as a structure against which a boardwalk and deck have been constructed. Scott used plastic wedges to raise the joists (90x45mm) for the deck up off the waterproof membrane and then fixed treated pine (140x45mm) perpendicular to the joists as the decking boards.

Blitz Tipz: If you are performing any work over a waterproof membrane ensure it is not damaged during the work. If it is damaged, ensure that it is repaired immediately.

Ezy-deck: Jamie laid a great looking entertaining area right outside the back door using Ezy-deck. Ezy-deck is a timber paving product that utilises off-cuts from other timber products, and it is simple to install. Best results are achieved by laying over a solid substrate, such as a concrete slab, with a slight fall to encourage water to drain away from beneath.



Tank planters: Jody planted out some great looking corrugated iron tanks as garden beds. Drainage cell and geo-fabric placed into the bottom of the planters enables water to drain away from the planting beds and prevents the soil from becoming waterlogged. Jody had to accurately calculate the volume of soil required to fill the planting beds as any excess or shortfall of soil could not easily be brought in or out of the site.

Blitz Tipz: Jody calculated the volume of all the planting tanks by determining the surface area of each tank and multiplying by the depth in metres. This gave her a number in cubic metres.



Table and benches: Jamie utilised an existing marble slab and concrete blocks to create a family-sized entertaining table. The concrete blocks mortared in place support the marble slab as a table top. Scott knocked up some lightweight benches using treated pine sleeper off-cuts (400x200x100mm) and stained treated pine (140x45mm) as the frame and bench top.

Blitz Tipz: Measure the height of an existing table and benches to ensure you build a comfortable setting.

Daybed: Scott created a daybed in a private zone next to the spa. Treated pine posts (90x90mm) support a frame of treated pine (140x45mm) nailed and bolted in place to form a rectangle with a central cross member. More pre-stained timber nailed perpendicular to the frame acts as a bench, which was decorated with cushions for comfort and style.

Blitz Tipz: We nailed the bench together but screwing it together would provide added strength.



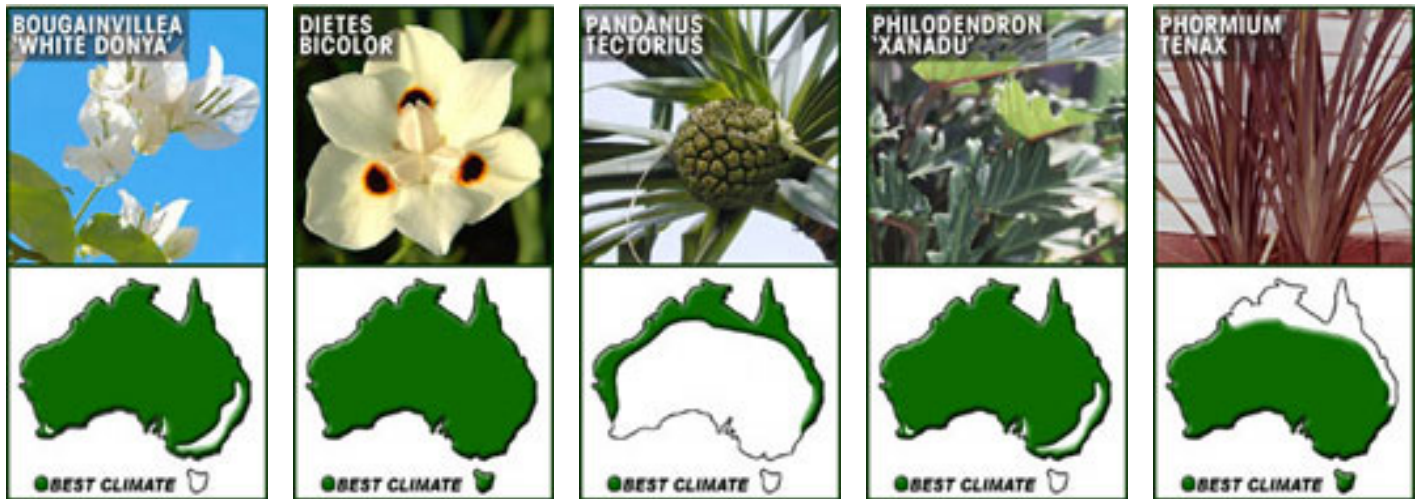
Plants

Tough, architectural plants have been chosen that will thrive in this harsh environment of high winds, full sun and very little water.

Tree: screw pine (*Pandanus tectorius*)

Shrubs and perennials: New Zealand flax (*Phormium tenax* 'Purpureum'), xanadu philodendron (*Philodendron* 'Xanadu'), lomandra (*Lomandra longifolia*), dietes or Spanish iris (*Dietes bicolor*)

Climber: bougainvillea sp. (*Bougainvillea* sp.)



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 \$16,550. The use of smaller plants would have reduced the cost to \$14,011.

Product details

- AusTimber supplied all timber used in this makeover. Ezy-deck costs about \$90 per square metre and is available from AusTimber Supplies on (02) 9627 5001.
- Botany Cranes provided lifting services with a 55 tonne crane, driver, dogmen and traffic controllers. Phone (02) 9666 6366 for more details on hire rates and crane capacities.
- Dynamic Building Supplies provided soil mix in bulk-a-bags for ease of lifting to the rooftop. Phone (02) 9660 5166 for further 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 or building or landscape suppliers.
- All tools used are commonly available for hire, including the concrete mixer and the nail gun.



Getaway details

Accommodation:

Shoal Bay Resort & Spa
Beachfront
Shoal Bay Road
Shoal Bay 2315
Phone: 1800 18 18 10
Fax: (02) 4984 1315
Email: reservations@shoalbayresort.com



Acknowledgements

Design by:

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

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