

# BACKYARD BLITZ

## Renovate or Detonate



Landscape designer, Andrew Davies, from **dig** has created a romantic, European rambling garden. Accessibility was a major issue for Sara, so a large deck and gently sloping pathway to the pool was created.

A summerhouse provides a focal point in the garden and a destination from which to view the rest of the garden. Fenceline plantings will provide future privacy while citrus trees will provide the added bonus of fruit and the sweet fragrance of orange blossom.

## Getting started

Drainage and site excavation were the first projects on day one. A bobcat and excavator created sub-grade levels for the paving, pathway and garden beds and helped to move bulk materials into the site.



## Garden elements

**Retaining walls:** Level areas were created in this sloping backyard by the clever use of retaining walls. Loc-A-Bloc blocks form an attractive and solid curved wall around the deck and a low wall along the edge of the pathway to retain a raised garden bed. The large wall behind the deck required a reinforced concrete footing upon which the blocks are laid. The hollow blocks were then core filled with concrete, and blue metal (20mm) and an agricultural pipe installed behind the wall to direct water into the garden.

The low garden wall was only one course high with a capping and as a result did not require a concrete footing. A compacted roadbase footing provided a stable base for the first course. Filled with concrete and then capped with a large capping piece glued down with construction adhesive, the wall provides an aesthetic link to the back of the house.

**Blitz Tipz:** Large retaining walls are best left to professional landscapers or builders, as walls over 1m high may require engineering specifications and council approvals.

**Decking:** A large deck leads around to the rear of the house providing level access to the garden and an area from which Sara can easily enjoy the garden. A treated pine frame supports hardwood blackbutt decking. Treated pine ledgers (90x45mm) dyna-bolted to the brick walls at the rear of the house support bearers (140x45mm) attached to posts with galvanised cup head bolts. Joists (90x45mm) skew nailed to the top of the bearers at 450mm centres support the hardwood decking. The blackbutt decking was pre-drilled at the ends to prevent splitting and trimmed with a jigsaw to fit around the curve in the retaining wall.

**Blitz Tipz:** Hardwood decking looks great and is only about 30% more expensive to purchase than treated pine decking. However, labour costs are significantly higher because of the need to pre-drill boards and because hardwood decking is delivered in a range of lengths meaning more joins between boards.

**Summerhouse:** An octagonal summerhouse in a heritage style was supplied and installed by The Australian Summerhouse Company. This dramatic feature provides a focal point to the garden as well as a great spot to sit and admire the overall garden. Pre-fabricated, the kit form summerhouse was erected in about 4 hours and bolted to the new concrete slab beneath it. A new paint job in fresh colours bring the whole structure to life and will provide a peaceful contemplative zone to the garden.

**Blitz Tipz:** Check with your local council before ordering and installing a feature like this as it may require development approval.



**Paving:** The swimming pool and coping were retained when the house was detonated, providing established levels and shapes for the new paving. Large format charcoal coloured limestone pavers (Premier Stone, 400x400x40mm) were laid in a grid pattern to create a level accessible area around three-quarters of the pool. A sub-grade of compacted roadbase 120mm thick supports coarse washed river sand. Levels were established with the sand to ensure surface runoff travels away from the pool and into the surrounding garden beds. Fine grained grouting sand was swept through the pavers and a concrete haunch around the perimeter prevents the bedding sand from washing out beneath the pavers.

**Blitz Tipz:** Curved swimming pools require many pavers to be cut to complete paving patterns. Try to minimise the cutting by running straight lines parallel with the existing coping and make sure you hire a diamond blade bricksaw.



**Concrete pathway:** A slight slope from the new deck to the newly paved pool area is linked with a charcoal coloured concrete pathway. Basic excavation and marking with a spray can determined the best shape, while the pad at the top of the slope needed to reflect the octagonal shaped summerhouse above. A combination of timber formwork and plastic garden edging were used to create the desired shape. Reinforcing steel mesh (F62) placed on plastic bar chairs and held together with wire ties sits in the middle of the slab (80mm thick).

Concrete was brought into the site with a concrete pump and roughly screeded with a long aluminium screed. Allowed to "go off" slightly the pathway was steel floated before being broom finished and edged. The formwork was removed at the last minute to preserve the neat edges of the path.

**Blitz Tipz:** As the top edge of the formwork is used as a rail over which the screed is dragged, ensure all pegs are lower than this edge and that the top of the formwork is at the finished height of the concrete.

**Garden Beds:** Jody created new garden beds behind the retaining walls by incorporating some organic garden mix with the site soil. An organic mulch of forest fines will help to suppress weeds and retain soil moisture.

**Blitz Tipz:** Cut and fill styles of construction tend to leave the subsoil of the site exposed. Ask the builder to stockpile the site soil and to supervise distribution throughout your new garden area following completion of construction.

## Plants

Trees, shrubs and feature succulents provide foliage texture and contrast and an attractive focal point in the large central urn.

**Trees:** lemon-scented myrtle (*Backhousia citriodora*), eumundi quandong (*Elaeocarpus eumundi*)

**Palm:** golden cane palm (*Dypsis lutescens*)

**Shrubs:** coast rosemary (*Westringia 'Sea Mist'*), plectranthus (*Plectranthus 'Nico'*), cordyline (*Cordyline fruticosa* cvs)

**Perennials:** lily turf (*Liriope 'Royal Purple'*), felt bush (*Kalanchoe baharensis*), moses-in-a-cradle (*Tradescantia spathacea*), fan flower (*Scaevola 'New Wonder'*), rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), bush germander (*Teucrium fruticans*), lomandra (*Lomandra 'Tanika'*), New Zealand flax (*Phormium 'Maori Chief'*), *Hypocalymma 'Golden Veil'*, giant catmint (*Nepeta 'Six Hills Giant'*), society garlic (*Tulbaghia violacea*), trailing pratia (*Pratia puberula*), sedum (*Sedum 'Mini Joy'*), purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), black leaf elephant ear (*Colocasia 'Black Magic'*)

**Climbers:** bower vine (*Pandorea jasminoides*)

**Groundcover:** ground morning glory (*Convolvulus sabatius*)

## 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 \$29,082. The use of smaller plants would have reduced the cost to \$26,587.

## Product details

- The Australian Summerhouse Company provides kit form gazebos and summerhouses or they can install them for you. The model in this garden costs \$5550 for supply only plus \$800 for installation. Call (02) 9651 4840 for further details.
- Loc-A-Bloc retaining walls are easy to use and provide a feature in themselves. Call 1800 027 070 or visit their website at [www.locabloc.com.au](http://www.locabloc.com.au)
- Boral concrete provided the coloured concrete - 'Onyx'. Coloured concrete costs from \$260 per cubic metre depending on the oxide colour selected.
- Premier Stone pavers are available in eight colours and three different finishes. They are available in halves, triangles and circular shapes. They cost about \$61 per square metre, call (02) 9654 0861 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 or building or landscape suppliers.
- All tools used, are commonly available for hire, including the airless spray gun and the Kanga mini excavator.

## Acknowledgments

Design by **dig**  
design - ideas - gardens  
Phone (02) 9416 6022

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

## Further information

For more information on this makeover click [here](#).

