

# BACKYARD BLITZ

## Doing it for the Kids

*"If you save one child, you save the world"*



Father Chris Riley established the charity organisation Youth Off The Streets to help abused and drug dependent youth get off the streets. His lifelong dedication to helping homeless youth saw him awarded the 2003, New South Wales Australian of the Year. Father Riley has helped more than 45,000 homeless youths over the last 13 years.

The Backyard Blitz team responded to a request to create a recreational space within the quadrangle of this heritage listed property in western Sydney, and had a great time meeting some of the young men and women that Father Riley has helped.



## Design intent



Landscape designer, Andrew Davies, responded to the challenge of a mixture of architecture types surrounding the space and the diversity of recreational needs within this group of garden users. A viewing deck and pergola structure act as a focal point in this large quadrangle. A newly turfed sports court provides an active area for the teenagers to burn off excess energy, while a secretive garden and bench seat beneath mature plantings of palms and cycads provides a quiet zone for catching up and hanging out.

**Design ideas:** The contemporary feel to this design blends well with the heritage-listed homestead because the colours and plant material reflect the age of the property. Many plants were sourced from the Mediterranean during the time in which the property was first constructed. Matching these plant types ensures continuity in the garden design.

## 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:** Check with your local council regarding regulations about structures in the backyard. Always talk to your neighbours and the council before commencing your project as it could save you thousands of dollars and will help to make the project run smoothly.

## Getting started

A bobcat was used to scrape the grass off the built upon areas and to excavate holes for planting and the deck. The perimeter of the new garden area was marked out on the ground with spray paint and the team got to work.

## Garden elements

**Pergola and deck:** Scott knocked up another of his famous decks with a twist: a canti-levered skillion roof. Treated pine was used for all parts of the deck including H4, 90x90mm posts. Posts were installed vertically in ground in rapid setting concrete. The pergola posts were double posts nailed together and run through the deck to support the beams of the pergola. Bearers (190x45mm) were bolted to the posts with galvanised cup-head bolts (150x10mm) and supported joists (90x45mm) skew nailed perpendicular to the tops of the bearers. 90mm decking boards nailed to the top of the joists provide a platform beneath the new canter-levered roof.

Beams bolted to the face of the posts support rafters (140x45mm) and battens (70x35mm). A colorbond roof screw fixed to the battens provides shade to the deck below.

A simple set of sleeper steps was constructed leading from the paved pathway on each side of the deck, and a fascia of decking boards was run around the perimeter of the posts to disguise the framework beneath the deck.

**Blitz Tipz:** Pre-paint all timbers when they are on the ground. You get a better quality finish and it is much safer.



**Paving:** Nigel laid two pathways to lead from either side of the quadrangle to Scottie's deck. Clay pavers (Morocco, Pavescape) were laid in a stretcher bond pattern over a compacted road base sub-grade and coarse washed river sand. Grout sand was swept through the gaps in the pavers and a concrete haunch installed around the perimeter of the path to lock the job in place.

**Blitz Tipz:** Use a fine, kiln dried sand to sweep between your pavers as it will fall easily into place.



**Bench seat:** Jamie built a zigzag bench seat to create a private nook for contemplation. Treated pine sleepers (200x75x2400mm) installed vertically in ground as posts support sleeper off-cuts bolted in place as bearers. Lengths of treated pine (90x45mm) laid on edge with blocks between each act as the bench top.

**Blitz Tipz:** Measure a seat to determine comfortable bench heights and widths.

**Sports court:** The power of the bobcat was utilised to remove a concrete pathway and to scrape the existing grass from the proposed sports court. Fresh new turf was laid to define the new play area, while a line marker defined the edge of the court and a volleyball net was set up so play could start.

**Blitz Tipz:** The size of a standard volleyball court is 16m x 8m. A gentle slope from the centre of the court toward the edges will ensure water does not pool in the middle of the court.



**Garden beds:** Jody improved the existing clay site soil by incorporating organic matter and cow manure into the new garden beds. Both organic and pebble mulches were used to retain soil moisture, maintain temperature and reduce weed growth. Jody chose horticultural grade pine bark (15mm), green pebbles (30-60mm) and Nepean River pebbles (10mm).

**Blitz Tipz:** Use different mulches to define different zones within the garden.

**Mature plants:** Large specimen plants are a dominant feature of this makeover. Planting holes were much larger than the root balls and the sides were well broken up to enable roots to penetrate the surrounding soil. Watering tubes were installed into the side and base of each planting hole to enable water to be fed to the bottom of the root ball during the establishment period.

**Blitz Tipz:** Always inspect mature plants before ordering them to ensure that they are well grown and will fit into your site.

## Plants

A mixture of succulents, palms and colourful shrubs were selected to reflect the age of the surrounding garden. Gardens around many homestead-style properties built in this era include a range of exotic plants from around the world.

**Tree:** Emperor mandarin (*Citrus reticulata* 'Emperor')

**Palms and cycads:** Carnarvon palm (*Livistona nitida*), cycad (*Cycas thouarsii*), cycad (*C. revoluta*)

**Shrubs and perennials:** red hot poker (*Kniphofia uvaria*), New Zealand cabbage tree (*Cordyline australis* 'Purpurea'), lomandra 'Tanika' (*Lomandra longifolia* 'Tanika'), sacred bamboo (*Nandina domestica*), Sundance Hybrid Tea rose (*Rosa* 'Sundance') giant bird of paradise (*Strelitzia nicholai*)

**Groundcovers:** lambs ears (*Stachys byzantina*), gazania (*Gazania tomentosa*)

**Succulents:** agave (*Agave attenuata*), flapjacks kalanchoe (*Kalanchoe thyrsiflora* 'Flapjacks')

**Turf:** zoisya (*Zoisya japonica* 'Empire')



## 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 \$19,298. The use of smaller plants would have reduced the cost to \$11,710.

## Product details

- Nigel laid Morocco coloured pavers from the Pavescape range. These clay pavers cost \$48 per square metre. Phone Boral for more details on 133 035.
- Green pebbles make a great statement around the succulents. They cost about \$50 per bag and are available from Stone Decorative Pebbles in Sydney. Phone (02) 4567 7468.
- Contrasting colours on each member of the pergola gives the space a real lift. The posts were painted 'Tapestry Blue', the beams in 'Moroccan Stone' and the rafters in 'Elephant Walk'. All colours were from the Bristol range and an exterior low sheen acrylic was used.
- 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 mini loader and the nail gun.



### Getaway details

#### Accommodation

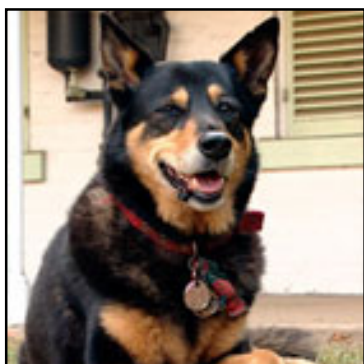
Father Riley was filmed at another of the Youth Off The Streets properties in Canyonleigh.

#### Acknowledgements

Design by **dig**  
design - ideas - gardens  
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Construction by the Backyard Blitz team (all gardens are gifts from Backyard Blitz).



For more Step by Step  
Constructions  
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