

# BACKYARD BLITZ

## Simonds Catholic College



Simonds Catholic College in Melbourne is typical of so many schools located in the inner city. High rise buildings and concrete surround the school, leaving little room for a green space in which the students can relax and recuperate. Robert Sebbens, a dedicated PE teacher at the school, wrote to Backyard Blitz on behalf of the school and students. Robert hoped the Blitz team could weave some of their magic and convert the school courtyard into an area to inspire the boys and also to thank their Principal, Bernie McFarlane, for all his hard work and support.



### Design intent

Melbourne based landscape designer, Jim Fogarty, has created a reflective, contemplative garden complete with a commercially inspired timber sculpture. A narrow water rill provides a formal axis beneath large deciduous trees. Strong blocks of colour have been introduced to the space in the shape of white blocks that double as seating and a curving yellow timber bench. Granite chunks provide informal seating arrangements beneath the large trees and invite students to use the space for outdoor classes.

**Design ideas:** Don't be afraid to use bold primary colours in the garden. Contrasting colours help each feature to stand out in this drab environment, creating interest while helping to lift the atmosphere from sombre to cheerful.

### 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:** storage of building materials on and around a site requires careful planning. Make sure that materials cannot wash down stormwater drains and do not impede pedestrians or road traffic with your stored materials.

## Getting started

A bobcat was used to remove the existing synthetic grass and buried concrete. Large planting holes for mature specimen trees were prepared with an excavator.

## Garden elements



**Timber sculpture:** Scott used large inland cypress beams (190x190mm) to create a dominant central sculpture. Pairs of beams were bolted together with galvanised cup head bolts (12mm diam. x 400mm) to form a series of crosses. A horizontal beam slotted and bolted into place in the uppermost fork of the crosses helps to maintain lateral stability of the sculpture, while the bases were partially buried in a concrete footing to hold it in place vertically. Prefabricated metal bands knocked onto the top of the posts will help to reduce splitting of the exposed end grain of the timber. **Blitz Tipz:** These timber beams are a structurally graded timber appropriate for this external use. Discuss your project with a timber supplier to ensure you use the best materials.



**Curving bench:** A concrete path and brick wall provided the perfect location for a long, curving bench seat. Scott used deck construction principles and materials to build the bench. Adjustable, galvanised stirrups were dynabolted into the existing concrete path to support posts (H4, 90x90mm) connected with galvanised bolts. Posts were placed at irregular distances and angles from the wall to create a curving face to the bench. A bearer (90x90mm) bolted to the posts and a bearer (also known as a ledger or wall plate) dynabolted to the wall support joists, skew nailed in place with a nail gun. Decking boards (90x20mm) nailed onto the joists provide the benchtop. Decking boards nailed up the face of the seat hide the underside of the bench and give a solid look to the structure. **Blitz Tipz:** Make sure that concrete slabs are at least 100mm thick before you connect stirrups with dynabolts.



**Water feature:** two prefabricated pond shells (100mm wide, 6100mm long) were riveted together and painted with a waterproof, bituminous membrane. The shells were laid level in a sand-filled trench and surrounded by pavers (300x300mm) in a mortar bed. A sump with a galvanised metal grate houses the low voltage pump, which circulates water throughout the feature. **Blitz Tipz:** Only a licensed electrician can legally install a new powerpoint. Installation costs from \$200, depending on the location.



**Block seats:** Aerated concrete Hebel blocks (600x200x300mm) have been stacked to create formal seating between planted areas. A sand and cement footing supports the base course of blocks, while Hebel adhesive bonds the second course to the first. A coat of white exterior acrylic paint completes the formal seating. **Blitz Tipz:** Hebel blocks need to be sealed with a surface treatment to prevent them from absorbing moisture and deteriorating when they are used outdoors.



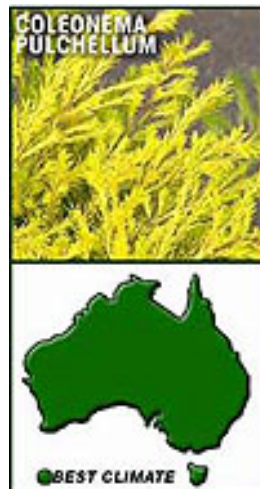
**Garden beds:** Jody created slightly raised planting beds by adding an organic soil mix to the site soil before planting out. A decorative mulch of finely crushed granite (5mm) retains soil moisture and provides a neutral backdrop to the bright sculpture and lush plantings. **Blitz Tipz:** Ensure that mulch does not sit directly against the trunk of plants.

## Plants

Cold climate plants were selected for their tolerance to this harsh urban environment and to provide year round interest with ever changing foliage colours.

**Tree:** designer catalpa (*Catalpa bignonioides* 'Nana')

**Shrubs:** diosma (*Coleonema pulchellum* 'Aurea'), sacred bamboo (*Nandina domestica*), lophomyrtus (*Lophomyrtus bullata* 'Rainbows End')



## Cost and availability

We used some mature plants in our makeover to create an instant effect for television. As a result, our total cost for plants and materials was \$10,160. This cost could be reduced to \$8269 by using smaller plants.

## Product details

- Cypress beams were sourced from Redgum Supplies in Melbourne. Phone (03) 9551 3244 for more details.
- The prefabricated water trough was manufactured and delivered by Reece Plumbing in Lillydale, Melbourne. The trough cost \$180.
- Hebel blocks are available at most leading hardware outlets from about \$10 per block (price varies depending on block dimensions). For technical information contact CSR on 1300 369 448.
- Large granite boulders were sourced directly from Hillview Quarries outside Melbourne. Phone (03) 5987 2600 for delivery details and charges.
- Most of the plants we used are readily available at nurseries. If not, your nursery can order them for you or give you advice about 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 and landscape suppliers.
- All tools used are commonly available for hire, including the bobcat and nail gun.



## Getaway details

Principal McFarlane took the Year 7 boys on a school camp:  
Camp Tallawalla  
215 Spraggs Road  
Toolangi  
Phone: (03) 5962 9219  
Fax: (03) 5962 9052



## Acknowledgments

**Design by:**  
Jim Fogarty Design Pty Ltd  
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Construction by the Backyard Blitz team (all gardens are a gift from Backyard Blitz).

For more Step by Step Constructions click here

