

BACKYARD BLITZ

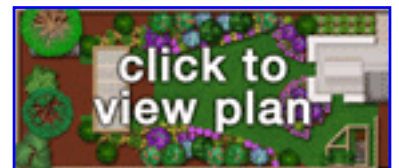
Mediterranean Makeover



The El Cheikhs are a typical Aussie family. Recently married with two young children, Zahra and her husband Maher have worked hard to establish a home for their family. The El Cheikhs are also devout Muslims, and for Maher this means praying at the mosque across the road 5 times a day, 7 days a week. On the days that he works, Maher attends the mosque at the end of the day to say all the prayers he has missed during the day. Zahra asked the Backyard Blitz team to help create a garden that would remind her husband of his homeland.

Landscape designer Colin Brown has created a contemporary Australian version of a Mediterranean garden to bring a piece of Lebanon to suburban Lakemba.

New white concrete pavers combined with white bagged Hebel blocks were used to make a unique entertaining area. Timber arbours provide shelter for the children's swing set and double as a climbing frame for fruiting grapes. Colourful plantings of plumbago, daylilies, firewheel trees and Chinese junipers produce a colourful reminder of the Mediterranean in this urban setting.



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 approvals: Check with your local council regarding regulations about garden structures

and decking. Some items will require approval from your local council if they impinge on neighbours' privacy or affect their views.

Materials

Hebel columns: an existing pergola has been converted into a stylish entertaining area by removing a brick planter box and retaining steel posts and timber framework. Non-load bearing columns built with Hebel blocks (200x200x600mm and 300x200x600mm) were used to provide partial screening and lend a solid feel to the space. Blocks stacked vertically were joined with hebel adhesive and bagged with a 4:1 mortar mix (4 parts white brickie's sand to 1 part off-white cement). All blocks and framework were painted white and the structure was completed with white calico curtains (1100x1800mm) suspended between the columns. **Blitz Tipz:** Hebel is a great lightweight aerated concrete building product. It requires sealing if used outdoors and should not be used as a loadbearing material without professional advice. Call CSR Hebel on 1300 369 448 for technical advice.



Garden arbour: Scott constructed a decorative and functional set of arbours to provide shade above the children's swing set and to support fruiting grape vines. All timber used was treated pine. Posts (H4, 90x90mm) were installed in-ground in concrete and support beams (140x45mm) connected with galvanised bolts. Sarlon shade cloth stretched tight across the top of the beam was used to cast shade while concrete reinforcing mesh (F72) laid over the edge of the beam has provided a grape climbing frame. Cut to shape and connected with galvanised u-shaped nails, the mesh has created a unique and cost-effective climbing frame. **Blitz Tipz:** Provide further stability to four posted arbours by bracing each corner from the post to the beam.



Paving: Nigel laid alabaster Besser block capping pieces (390x195mm) as pavers. The existing concrete slab was retained as it provided a solid sub-base. Metal dust spread to a thickness of 40mm and levelled with a screed and screed rails acted as a bedding course for the pavers. Kiln dried fine sand (Sydney sand) swept through the pavers helped to bond them together. Perimeter pavers were

retained with a mortar haunch to prevent sand from washing away. **Blitz Tipz:** A by-product of the production of blue metal, metal dust is a cheap alternative to paving sand and is available at most landscape suppliers.

Garden beds: Jody improved the site soil by incorporating organic garden mix into planting areas to a depth of 200mm. Horticultural grade pine bark mulch (15mm) was spread to a depth of 75mm to insulate the soil and keep weed regrowth to a minimum. **Blitz Tipz:** When using organic garden mixes, ensure they are fully incorporated into the site soil.

Turf: A central lawn was used to provide a soft recreational area for visitors to the garden. A layer of turf underlay (80% sand/20% topsoil) spread to a depth of 50mm removed unevenness from the site and allowed the kikuyu lawn to quickly establish a vigorous root system. **Blitz Tipz:** Consider the frequency of maintenance you will need to carry out and the type of wear and tear to which your lawn will be exposed. Discuss your plans with a turf supplier to ensure you get the best turf for your needs.



Plants

Flowering trees, shrubs and perennials have been combined to create a colourful Mediterranean-style garden.

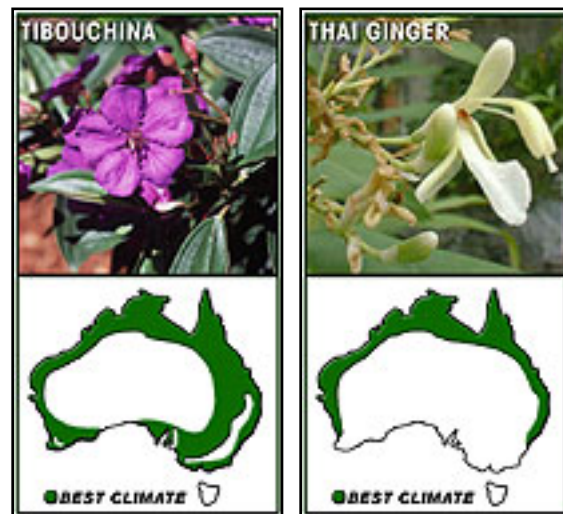
Trees: Chinese juniper (*Juniperus chinensis* 'Keteleerii'), olive (*Olea europaea* var. *europaea* 'Manzanillo'), Queensland firewheel tree (*Stenocarpus sinuatus*)

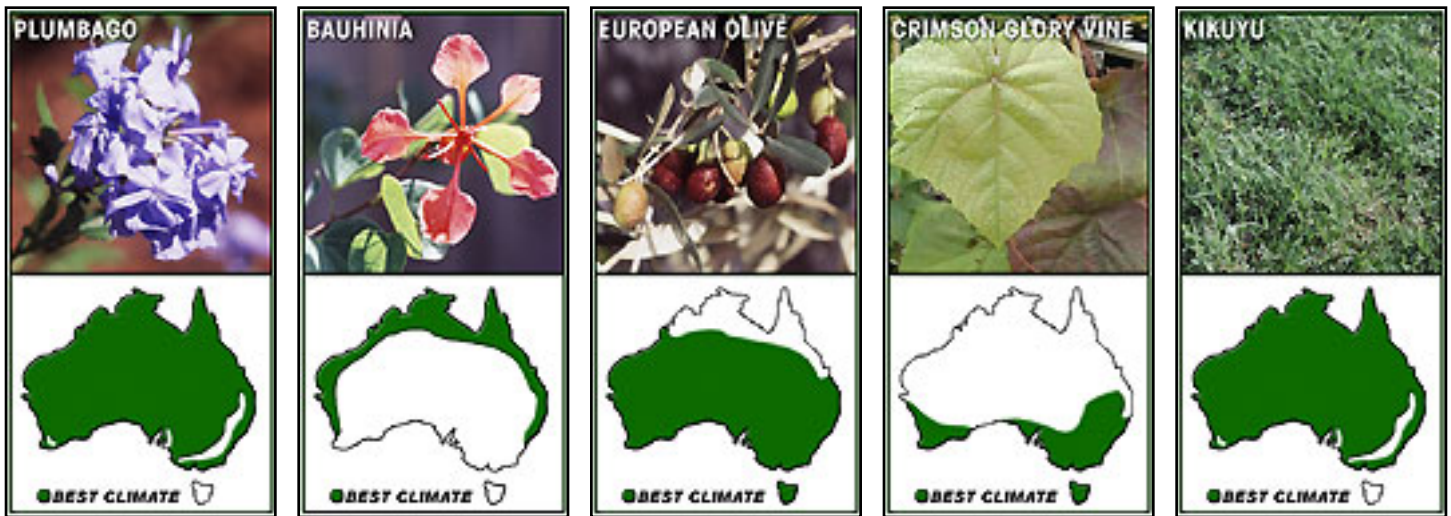
Shrubs: tibouchina (*Tibouchina* 'Alstonville', *Tibouchina* 'Jules'), butterfly bush (*Bauhinia galpinii*), plumbago (*Plumbago* 'Royal Cape')

Perennials: yellow ginger (*Hedychium flavum*), michaelmas daisy (*Aster novi-belgii*), trailing lantana (*Lantana montevidensis*), daylily (*Hemerocallis* cvs.), Thai ginger (*Alpinia galanga*),

Climber: Crimson glory vine (*Vitis coignetiae*)

Turf: Kikuyu (*Pennisetum clandestinum*)





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 \$10,487. This cost could be reduced to \$8464 by using less mature plants.

Product details

- Hebel blocks are available at good hardware stores from about \$9 each.
- Alabaster pavers are available at The Besser Block Centre in Sydney from \$23 per square metre. Phone (02) 9982 2536 for more details.
- A large trestle table covered with a calico tablecloth provides a family sized table setting. The table cost \$129 from Officeworks while the timber benches were \$200 each from Fagin's Furniture in Sydney.
- 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

Accommodation:

The Landmark Apartments
Dowling St
Nelson Bay
NSW 2315
Phone: (02) 4984 4633
www.theoaksrhm.com.au

Lunch location:

The Rock Lobster
6 Teramby Rd
Nelson Bay

NSW 2315

Phone: (02) 4981 1813

Tours:

Dawson's Cruises

PO Box 197

Nelson Bay

NSW 2315

Phone: (02) 4982 0444

www.dawsonscruises.com.au

Acknowledgments

Design by Colin Brown.

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

For more **Step by Step Constructions** [click here](#)



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