

BACKYARD BLITZ

Bright future

Kim Porter is battling cancer but husband, Colin, is confident of a bright future for the couple and their four year old daughter Kaija. To bring a ray of sunshine to their lives the Backyard Blitz team decided to create a bright new backyard. The old backyard had also been devastated 12 months ago in a hail storm so was in need of major work. We sent Colin and an unsuspecting Kim to a health spa for a couple of days while we went to work.



Landscape designer John Happ divided the long backyard into three distinct and functional areas. A narrow area adjacent to the house was paved and made into a barbecue area. Beyond this an alfresco dining space was made, looking out onto the third space, a lawn and garden with an ornamental fountain.



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What we did

Existing garden beds and plants were removed and a gate in the back fence relocated to fit into the new formal design. The fences and walls were painted and new paving and lawn was laid. The new garden beds were edged with a tile border and a fountain installed. Planter boxes were positioned along the walls and around the 'dining' area.

Materials

Paving: cobblestones (Carpet Stone), concrete pavers 400x400x40mm (Urbanstone quarry style 'New Yorker' colour and village style 'Tuscany' colour), all purpose tile sealant, sand and cement mix (40kg bags), paving sand, brickie's sand, grouting sand and cement. *Tools:* vibrating plate compactor, brick saw, paintbrush, spade, brickie's trowel, screed, screed rails, wheelbarrow, ruler and marker pen.

Garden edging and fountain: fountain (a concrete 2 tiered bowl with acorn fountain outlet), reconstituted sandstone garden edging tiles, road base, brickie's sand, cement, cement colourant (stain or oxide), low voltage fountain pump and transformer (Hozelock 100), conduit and elbows (20mm), conduit adhesive. *Tools:* vibrating plate compactor, brickie's trowel, wheelbarrow, electrical screwdriver and pliers, gel cap connectors, string line, shovel and spirit level.

Containers, garden beds and turf: reconstituted sandstone planters (1000x400x400mm) and urns, plants and turf (see list below), planter box mix, organic garden mix and humus as mulch. *Tools:* spade, turf roller and hedge shears.

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. Dial the 'Dial before you Dig' line on 1100 for information.

Blitz Tipz: Your existing house plans are a great place to start when making your site plan.

Step-by-step

Getting started: any rubbish, old structures, paving, weeds, etc should be removed and the site levelled. If your site requires levelling ensure adequate slope away from the house to prevent flooding in heavy rain. If your soil is of poor quality it can be mixed 50:50 with a good organic garden mix. If it is high in clay dig in gypsum or organic clay breaker.

Cobblestone paving

We paved the barbecue area with concrete cobblestones called Carpet Stone pavers that come in ready-to-lay strips that are quick to use. The strips have a nylon netting base which can be cut to shape. We paved over existing concrete pavers which gave a solid base and were already at the right slope for the drainage away from the house. Sand and cement mix was swept between the stones as a grout and was set with water.

Blitz Tipz: Ensure your paving slopes away from the house to avoid flooding in heavy rain.

Step 1 Lay about 30mm of paving sand over the area, level with a topsoil leveller and compact with a vibrating plate. Screed the sand in a sawing motion ensuring it is at the right level and slope.

Blitz Tipz: To make it easier to screed a large area use guide rails to position the screed. We used 40mm wide aluminium strips about 4mm thick and 4m long. To set up for the screeding first screed a narrow strip

down one side. Use a spirit level to check it is level then lay a screeding rail along this strip. Repeat the process on the opposite side. With the two outside strips correct, lay the screed across the rails and screed the sand in between. Screeds of varying widths are available from builder's supply shops or hardware stores.

Note: If you are not paving over existing structures you will need to prepare a solid base. Remove any debris and excavate to 130mm (plus the depth of the pavers so they lay flush with the existing ground level), fill with road base and compact to 100mm with a vibrating plate. Spread a 30mm layer of paving sand over the road base and screed as described above.

Step 2 Lay the Carpet Stone pavers, cutting the sheets to fit where necessary.

Step 3 To grout the stones spread sand and cement mix over the paving and sweep with a broom to fill the gaps. Sprinkle with water to wash the mix off the top of the stones and to set the cement. Leave overnight.

Blitz Tipz: We used bags of pre-mixed sand and cement to ensure it was perfectly dry and would flow easily between the stones when grouting.



Dining area paving

Concrete pavers were used to surface the outdoor dining area. The central paved area featured 'Tuscany' pavers laid in a diagonal pattern. Dark 'New Yorker' tiles formed a border.

Note: If you do not wish to go to the extra trouble of measuring and cutting pavers lay them square to each other.

We paved over existing concrete pavers which provided a solid base and were already at the right slope for drainage away from the house. There were walls on three sides of our paved area, which provided a solid structure to pave against. Where there was no existing structure we built a mortar haunch to hold the edges in position.

Step 1 Set up and screed the paving sand using **Step 1** for Cobblestone paving above.

Step 2 Seal the pavers to prevent staining. To do this scrub them with water and detergent to remove any oily residue and paint on an all purpose sealant.

Step 3 In preparation for starting the pattern lay the border pavers ('New Yorker') down the longest side (one side only) and the first paver only of the borders at each end. Use a string line to keep the paving straight.

Step 4 Use a brick saw to cut one of the centre pavers ('Tuscany') in half (a diagonal cut from corner to corner). Starting in one corner, lay them with their longest side against the border. Continue cutting and laying the pavers until you reach the end. You may have to make a second cut in the last paver so it will fit into the corner. Your paving should now have a shark's tooth effect.

Step 5 Lay the next row of pavers. Only the end two will require cutting to fit into the border.

Continue laying each row and the border pavers at the ends as you progress to the other side.

Step 6 You will have to cut the final row of centre pavers to fit inside the border. The easiest way to do this is to lay the row which will have to be cut (leave the border off), measure back the distance of a border paver (in our case 400mm) from the finished edge of the paving and mark the paver. Cut the paver, replace it in the row and move to the next paver. Make all of the cuts required then lay the border row.

Step 7 To hold the outside edges in position (unnecessary if up against a solid structure) make a concrete haunch. Start by excavating a 100mm trench around the outside edge of the paved area. This trench is filled with concrete (mix as per instructions on the bag). Use a brickie's trowel to compact concrete against the side of the pavers taking care not to mound it too high and spoil the look of the paving, allow to set overnight.

Step 8 Ensuring the paving is dry, sprinkle grouting sand (fine sand) over the paving and sweep to fill the gaps.

Blitz Tipz: Grouting sand flows best when completely dry so lightly sprinkle a layer over the paving and allow to bake in the sun for a couple of hours before sweeping in.

Garden edging and fountain

We edged the garden beds with reconstituted sandstone garden tiles and put a fountain in the central garden bed (see plan).

Step 1 Mark out the location of the garden beds with spray marker paint and excavate a trench for the edging 150mm wide and 100mm deep. Set up a string line to guide the placement of the edging tiles.

Blitz Tipz: Place the string line so it coincides with the top front edge of the tiles, this will allow you to determine both its height and position.

Step 2 Prepare a stiff mortar mix (1:4 ratio of cement and brickie's sand) lay a 50mm bed of mortar in the trench for the edging tiles. Place the tiles in position using the string line as a guide. Tap them into position with a rubber mallet and use a brickie's trowel to mound mortar up behind them. Finally mound soil up in front and behind to help hold it in position while the mortar sets. Leave overnight before resuming work on the garden.

Blitz Tipz: Soil sucks moisture out of the mortar making it set faster.

Step 3 Mark out the position of the fountain and excavate a 150mm bed.

Step 4 Mount the transformer for the low voltage fountain pump near an existing electrical outlet. Excavate a trench for the conduit from the transformer location to the bed of the fountain and lay the conduit, cutting to length, inserting elbows where necessary and threading the cable through as you go. Fill in the trench and replace any turf, earth disturbed in the process. The conduit should protrude about 100mm up the centre of the fountain pedestal.

Blitz Tipz: Wiggling the conduit as you push the cable through makes the job much easier.



Step 5 Place the fountain pump in the bowl and pass all but about 100mm of the cable through the hole in the bottom (if there is no hole drill one with a masonry bit). Seal the hole with sikaflex 11FC and allow to cure for 12 hours.

Step 6 Fill the fountain bed with road base, level and compact taking care not to damage the conduit. Pass the pump cable through the hole in the top of the pedestal and connect it to the low voltage cable with gel cap connectors. Lay 50mm of mortar in the bed and locate the fountain pedestal.

Step 7 Prepare a mortar mix (4:1 ratio of sand and cement) with a cement stain or oxide added to match the colour of the fountain. Place a 10mm layer of mortar on the top of the pedestal and locate the bowl. Use a spirit level to ensure the bowl is horizontal. Allow the mortar to set overnight.

Step 8 Slide a 500mm length of plastic hose over the pump outlet and thread it through each piece of the fountain as you assemble them - laying a 10mm mortar bed between each. Use a spirit level to ensure the top bowl is perfectly horizontal. Allow to set then trim the hose flush with the top of the fountain.

Step 9 Fill the bowls with water, test the pump.

Step 10 Fill the garden beds with existing soil or if it's of poor quality combine your existing soil with a good quality garden mix. Plant the garden keeping plants at the same depth as they were in their containers. Mulch with a 50mm layer of organic mulch (we used humus) over the entire garden and water thoroughly.



Planter boxes

We positioned reconstituted sandstone planter boxes around the walls of the dining area and along the wall in the barbecue area. They were placed directly on the pavers, filled with planter box mix and planted with gardenias. We also used reconstituted sandstone urns for the two cumquat standards which were underplanted with mondo grass. Remember to keep plants the same depth as they were in their containers, mulch with 50mm of organic mulch (we used humus) and water.



Laying the turf

We laid turf around the central garden bed.

Step 1 Prepare the area by removing all debris and levelling. If your soil is poor, spread a layer of a good quality turf soil mix and level with a topsoil leveller.

Step 2 Roll out the turf starting along the longest straight edge, and cutting to shape with hedge shears where required. Roll with a lawn roller and water.

Blitz Tip: Walking on freshly laid turf or allowing dogs to play on it can cause damage. It will take a couple of weeks for it to get established.

Our plants

Murraya (*Murraya paniculata*), mondo grass (*Ophiopogon japonicus*), gardenia (*Gardenia augusta* 'Florida'), cumquat (*Fortunella japonica*), camellia (*Camellia sasanqua* 'Jennifer Susan'), dwarf lasiandra (*Tibouchina* 'Jules'), euonymus (*Euonymus* 'Tom Thumb'), bedding geranium (*Pelargonium* 'Showcase'). Turf: soft buffalo 'Palmetto'.



murraya



gardenia
'Florida'



cumquat



camellia
'Jennifer
Susan'



dwarf lasiandra
(*Tibouchina*
'Jules')



**euonymus
'Tom Thumb'**



**bedding
geranium**



**soft buffalo
'Palmetto'**



mondo grass

Cost and availability

We used mature plants in our makeover to create an instant effect for television. Our total cost of plants and materials was \$13,170. Considerable savings are possible using smaller plants (\$8812).

- Plants are readily available at nurseries or ask your nursery to order plants for you.
- Most other materials are available from large hardware stores, building suppliers, or landscape suppliers.
- Cement stains are available from Menduni Garden Artistry (02) 9838 1645 and cement oxides are available from hardware stores.
- Fountains are available from garden centres or look under 'Fountains' in the Yellow Pages. We used a 2 tier fountain with acorn finial from Menduni Garden Artistry, Vineyard, NSW (02) 9838 1645.
- The reconstituted sandstone planter boxes and urns were from El Rancho Garden Products,

Ryde, NSW (02) 9809 2265.

- For your nearest distributor of Carpet Stone contact Daisho (Aust) Pty Ltd, phone: (02) 9267 3362.
 - The vibrating plate compactor, post hole shovel and most of the other tools required are available for hire.
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Acknowledgments

Design by John Happ, 3rd Dimension Designs, phone: (02) 9744 2658. Construction by the Blitz Team.

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