

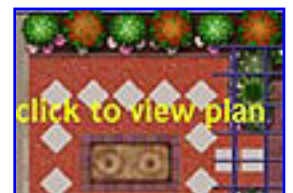
BACKYARD BLITZ

Formal Fancy



Graham and Imelda Gilmore have lived in their family home for 24 years and have always enjoyed the neighbourhood and their small sunny garden. However, Graham's strong commitment to his voluntary counselling work has meant his gardening time has shrunk as have his roses and vegetable patch. Imelda wanted to thank him for his tireless work supporting his family and the community, by asking the Backyard Blitz team to rebuild the rear garden to its former glory.

Landscape designer Matthew Cantwell from Secret Gardens of Sydney devised a formal layout for this small backyard. As the site slopes slightly two low walls divide it into three distinct levels. Sandstone blocks step up from the rear of the house to a formal pond surrounded by sandstone stepping stones and gravel. A timber arbour divides the area into two garden rooms and provides a backdrop for a pair of urns on plinths. A second step beneath the arbour invites visitors through to a rear brick paved entertaining area. Privacy is provided along either boundary with massed shrubs.



Adapting this plan to your garden

Make a detailed scale drawing of your backyard (eg 1:100) showing the location of the house or main buildings and other major features. Then incorporate the desired elements from our makeover. As your backyard 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 approval: many structures in the backyard require council approval as they can have an impact on your neighbours. Always discuss your plans with your local council before commencing building in the backyard.

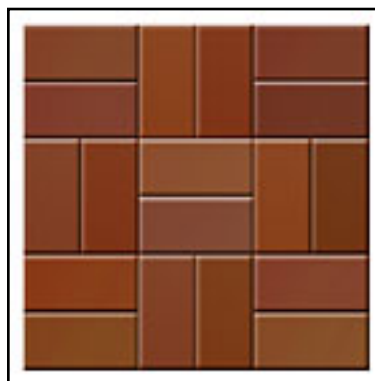
Materials

Arbour: use appropriately treated timber in structures that are exposed to the weather. All structural timbers used in the arbour were rough sawn, treated pine in the following sizes: posts



(90x90x3000mm); beams(140x45x6000mm); rafters (140x45x2000mm). Posts were installed 800mm in the ground in concrete. Pre-fabricated, framed lattice (closed diagonal, dressed, 1800x1800mm with a 1000x1000mm square cutout) was screwed to the rear posts to create a partial screen. **Blitz Tipz** Don't make garden structures over paths too small. Make sure what you build is wide enough and high enough to enable you to pass through comfortably with a wheelbarrow, lawnmower or to carry furniture through.

Paving: Bowral Chestnut pavers (30mm thick) from Amber were laid in the rear entertaining area. Pavers were laid in a basketweave pattern over coarse washed river sand and a compacted sub-layer of roadbase. A fine grouting sand (Sydney sand) was swept through the pavers to bond them together and a mortar haunch was laid beneath and against the edge pavers to retain it all. **Blitz Tipz** Ensure your paving falls away from any structures or into existing drains. A minimum recommended fall on pavers is 1 to 100, which means that for every 100cm (1 metre) your paving travels it should drop 1cm to encourage good drainage.



Basketweave pattern

Sandstone step: hydrasplit sandstone blocks (162x100x600mm) were laid to create a level area to house the formal pond. Each block was laid onto a 3:1 mortar mix (three parts sand to one part cement) over an existing concrete slab with a 10mm mortar joint between each block. **Blitz Tipz** Sandstone can be ordered in a range of sizes and finishes depending on your project requirements. A visit to a sandstone supply yard is recommended as stone comes in many colours and textures.

Garden beds: garden beds were defined with a brick paver edge (Bowral Chestnut, 30mm) laid on a 3:1 mortar pad. 10mm mortar joints were left between each paver. A commercial organic soil mix was incorporated with the existing site soil (a sandy loam) to improve soil structure. Horticultural grade pine bark (15mm) was spread to a depth of 100mm as a mulch, to retain soil moisture and to suppress weed growth.

Stepping stones: a level area for the stepping stones and pond was created by building a single course sandstone wall and filling behind it with soil. Hydrasplit sandstone blocks (162x100x600mm) were laid onto a 3:1 mortar mix (three parts sand to one part cement) over an existing concrete slab with a 10mm mortar joint between each block. Large sandstone pavers (500x500x35mm) were laid into a bed of 3:1 mortar a step length apart. Riverina red gravel (14mm) was spread to a depth of 100mm as a decorative mulch surrounding the stepping stones and pond. **Blitz Tipz** Pace your proposed stepping stones out in a relaxed walk to ensure they are neither too close nor too far apart.

Pond: a prefabricated fibreglass pond (2000x900x300mm) was laid into the ground on a bed of river sand. All cavities were backfilled with river sand and a strip of concrete around the edge provided a base on which to lay bullnose coping pavers (Bowral Chestnut, 50mm thick). Coping pavers overhang the pond edge by 40mm and have 10mm mortar joints between them. Nepean River pebbles (40mm) in the pond reduce the water depth to a child safe 100mm and house two low voltage submersible pumps (Hozelock H1400). Both pumps are connected to a low voltage transformer (Hozelock T100) with low voltage wire buried beneath the gravel mulch. This transformer is plugged into an existing powerpoint in the rear shed.

As an extra safety precaution, the pond was also fitted with a mesh cover that sat just below the water level.



Blitz Tipz Formal ponds and water features are easiest to construct with a prefabricated shell and are less likely to leak than other methods such as polypropylene liners, brick or concrete. Nevertheless, the water level will still need to be checked and topped up regularly.



Pots: a formal element was introduced to the garden with reconstituted sandstone plinths and urns to hold pots of orchids (Imelda's own collection). A large trough (1000x400x400mm) contained herbs while a round tub (800x500mm) held an advanced standard rose which was a feature of the garden.

Fencing: a section of fencing was repaired with new treated pine fence posts (two hole), rails (35x70mm) and pine palings. Posts were installed 800mm in ground using Rapid Set concrete. The fences were painted Bristol 'Mountain Blue' using an airless spray gun. **Blitz Tipz** If building a new fence, consider using steel posts as most fences that fall over do so because their timber posts have rotted.

Plants

A small number of hardy plants were used in repetition to create a simple and elegant garden in this small area.

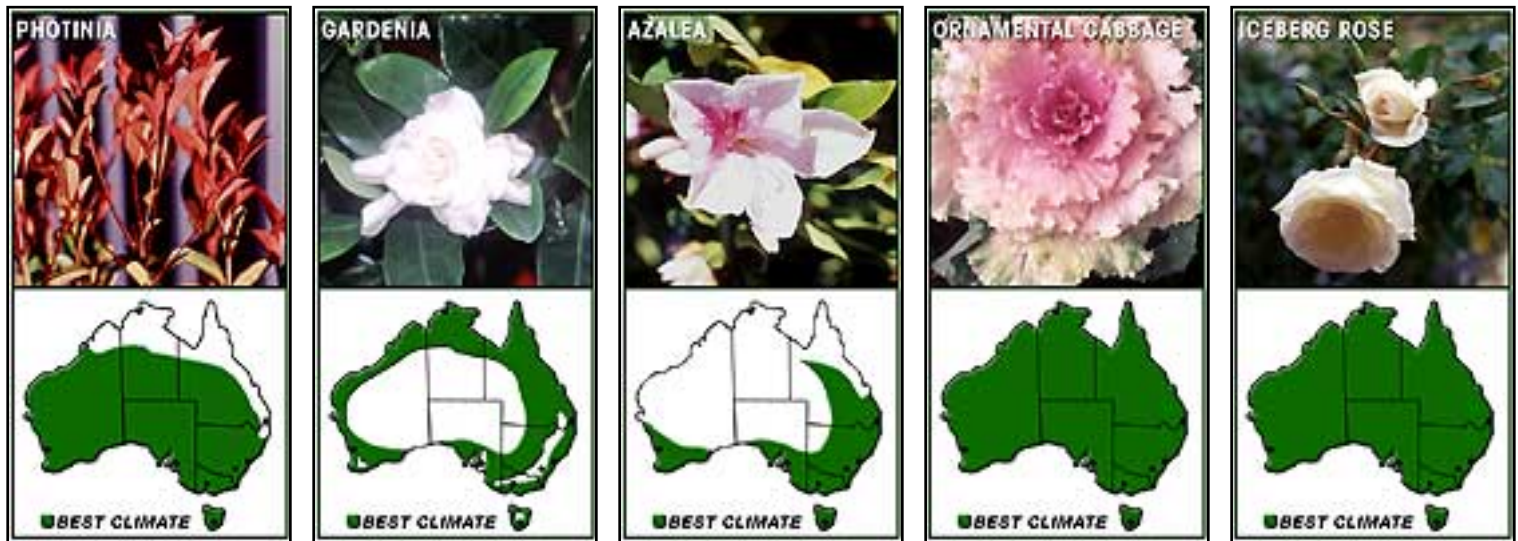
Trees: evergreen or flowering ash (*Fraxinus griffithii*)

Shrubs: photinia (*Photinia glabra* 'Rubens'), gardenia (*Gardenia augusta* 'Florida'), fringe flower

(*Loropetalum chinese* 'Burgundy'), azalea ('Alphonse Anderson'), dwarf arum lily (*Zantedeschia aethiopica*)

Border plants: ornamental cabbage (*Brassica oleracea* Acephala Group)

Potted plants: 'Iceberg' rose, assorted herbs, cymbidium orchids



Cost and availability

We used some mature plants in our makeover to create an instant effect for television. As a result, our total cost of plants and materials was \$9797 This cost could be reduced to \$7905 by using smaller plants.

Product details

- Sandstone blocks and stepping stones were purchased from Sydney Sandstone; phone: (02) 4576 3439. Contact your local stone supplier for cost as prices vary depending on dimensions and finish on the stone.
- Large reconstituted sandstone pots, plinths and trough were supplied by El Rancho Garden Products in Sydney; phone: (02) 9809 2265.
- Bowral Chestnut pavers (30mm) and coping (50mm) were purchased from Amber for around \$35 per square metre and \$3.50 each respectively; phone: (02) 9831 7271 (head office, Sydney) for further details.
- Riverina red gravel (14mm) and similar decorative gravels are available from all good landscape suppliers and some nurseries from \$130 per tonne.
- Prefabricated black fibreglass pond (2000x9000x300mm) cost \$500 from Contour Ponds in Sydney; phone: (02) 9690 2600. Low voltage pumps and transformers are available at nurseries, hardware stores and some pet stores.
- Most of the plants we used are readily available at nurseries or ask your nursery to order them for you or advise similar varieties suited to your area. You may need to contact specialist nurseries for some plants. Your local nursery should be able to provide contacts to you.
- Most other materials such as mulch and pebbles are available from large hardware stores, building or landscape suppliers.
- All tools used are commonly available for hire including the airless spray gun and the Kanga mini-excavator. No specific licence is required for this machine.

Getaway details

Accommodation: Kirkton Park Country House Hotel, Oakey Creek Road, Pokolbin, NSW; phone: (02) 4998 7680

email: kirkton.park@hunterlink.net.au

Tours: Shadows Wine Country Tours; phone: (02) 4990 7002

Acknowledgments

Design by Matthew Cantwell from Secret Gardens of Sydney; phone: (02) 9365 6533. 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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