

# BACKYARD BLITZ

## Hawaiian Paradise



Janice and David Carroll's small triangular backyard has seen little change in the 30 years they've lived there. Times have been hard of late with David suffering a crippling stroke two years ago and Janice, despite having a major operation last year, still managing to work fulltime and care for David. The Blitz team sent Janice and David with their daughter Michelle, son-in-law Hugh and grand-daughter Leah for a two day country retreat in Berry NSW.

Knowing Janice's love for Hawaii, Blitz's Jamie Durie designed a relaxing mini-Hawaiian paradise in her own backyard. A raised bench style seating area was nestled into a tranquil tropical setting with a reflective pond. The gentle sounds of running water were provided by a highly innovative water feature incorporating a vertical cascade running along hardwood water channels, over a sloped ramp and into a concealed reticulation reservoir. Taking their two grand-children into account, accessible water depths are 50mm max and a sandpit is included in view of the kitchen window. A zig-zag fence feature, painted in 2 different colours, provides a varied background from two different aspects.



### What we did:

We cleared out unwanted plants, soil and an old garden shed. The two-toned zig-zag fence was constructed and extensive blockwork provided a backbone for the garden, water feature and Hebel bench seating. Blockwork and existing brick wall were bagged and water feature constructed, powered by a low-voltage submersible pump located in a hidden sump. Hardwood channels, jade green pavers and a reflecting pond completed the feature. Treated pine provided soft edging for the sandpit. Planting was offset by a mulch of Cowra Gold pebbles.

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### Materials:

**Zig-Zag Fence:** Treated pine posts (100x100mm), rails (75x50mm), fibre-cement sheeting (1800x1200mm), PVC jointing, quickset concrete (40kg bags), nails, screws, building adhesive, string line, cement paint and surface conditioner for the paint. **Tools:** Spade (or post hole shovel), Tape measure, square, electric screwdriver, crosscut saw (or chainsaw for flush cuts) spirit level, hammer, caulking gun, fibre cement cutters, knife, paint brush and roller.

**Blockwork:** Concrete blocks (200x200x400) and capping to suit, brickie's sand, cement. *Tools:* Safety goggles, ear protection, dust mask, brickie's trowel, spirit level, string line, tape measure, wheelbarrow, shovel, larry hoe, angle grinder, lump hammer and bolster. *Optional :* Cement mixer.

**Bagging:** Yellow brickie's sand, off-white cement, lime. *Tools:* Builder's sponge, waterproof gloves, bucket, wheelbarrow, shovel, larry hoe.

**Hebel Bench Seating:** Hebel slabs (3000x600x75mm), Hebel thin bed adhesive. *Tools :* Tape measure, square, circular saw, safety goggles, ear protection and dust mask.

**Water Feature:** Retention pit (700x700mm), 24V submersible pump, 25mm hose (length and fittings to suit), 30mm overflow pipe, galvanised trough, recycled hardwood (4000x150x100mm), sealant, pavers and mortar for watercourse, construction adhesive, reconstituted sandstone architrave, fibre cement sheeting, river pebbles mosaic, waterproof coloured grout. *Tools :* Spade, safety goggles, ear protection, angle grinder, lump hammer, cold chisel or chasing tool, planer, circular saw, mallet and chisel.

**Paving:** Standard and single bullnose pavers (Fern Riverstone 495x495x40mm), paving sand, grouting sand, readymix concrete. *Tools:* Safety goggles, ear protection, brick saw, wheelbarrow, shovel, screed, screed rails, brickie's trowel, broom.

**Sandpit:** Treated pine sleepers (150x100x2400mm), weedmat, washed riversand or 'sandpit' sand if available, steel rods (12x500mm), galv nails (100mm). *Tools :* Tape measure, square, saw, hammer, drill with 12mm auger, lump hammer, staple gun, wheelbarrow, spade, shovel.

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### 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.

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### Zig-Zag Fence

**Step 1** Mark out zig-zag fence line and post locations.

**Step 2** Dig holes for 100x100mm treated pine posts to 600mm deep. Insert posts and pack up to a finished height of 1800mm above ground level. Set in place with Rapid Set concrete, ensuring posts are vertical. Take care to ensure that posts are parallel to the zig-zag fence line.

**Blitz Tipz:** Rapid set concrete. Half fill hole with water then tip



in rapid set concrete. It starts to go hard in 15 minutes.

**Step 3** Once posts are solid, fasten 75x50mm treated pine rails at the top, along the middle and 300mm from the bottom of the fence using nailgun or screws (as hand-hammering on the same day may loosen posts). Flushcut rails on angle at posts when fastened.

**Step 4** Fasten fibre cement sheeting panels using construction adhesive and fibre cement nails. Insert PVC jointing between sheets and trim at top with knife. Use exterior gap-filler for angled joints. **Blitz Tipz:** Use a string line along front of sheets to mark rail centre for nailing.

**Step 5** Mix cement paint with conditioner and water as per instructions and apply to fibre cement sheeting. **Blitz Tipz:** Paint colours. Porter's Boncote Cement Paint is a powder that's mixed with water. We used 'Green Smoke' and 'Ayer's Rock'. 1Kg makes 1 litre and covers 6 square metres. You need two coats. We added Porter's Surface Conditioner when we mixed the paint. Prices: Paint 3.5kg - \$50, 10kg - \$101, 20kg - \$189. Surface Conditioner 1l - \$16, 2l - \$24, 4l - \$41. Need 2 litres/10kg paint.

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## Blockwork

**Blitz Tipz:** Besser blocks are light but strong, cost around \$2.50 each and are ideal for building planters and retaining walls.

As our walls and seating were laid over existing paving, the blocks could be laid directly onto the existing pavers. Otherwise, concrete or block footings would be required.

**Step 1** Mark out wall locations.

**Step 2** Mix up a fairly stiff mortar of 4 parts brickies sand to one part cement.

**Step 3** Lay end and corner blocks first, ensuring that they are level and plumb, then set up string line and lay blocks in between on a good bed of mortar. Butter ends of blocks with mortar and place blocks onto bed and up to next block. Tap blocks into position on mortar taking care not to overwork them. Strike excess mortar from the finished joints with the edge of the trowel.

**Step 4** Continue subsequent courses as for step 3.

**Step 5** Where capping is required on garden walls, lay on same mortar mix, setting end pieces first and laying in between.

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## Paving

**Blitz Tipz:** We used Riverstone Fern 495x495x40mm pavers, available from Amber Tiles in QLD, ACT and NSW for \$62/metre. We also used 6 single bullnose pavers (at \$31.50 each from Amber).

As our paving was laid over existing paving and undisturbed subgrade, there was no need for a compacted roadbase layer under the paving sand. Usually you would excavate to paver thickness (in this case 40mm) plus 30mm paving sand plus 75-100mm compacted roadbase for pedestrian areas.

**Step 1** Mark out area to be paved. Bring in paving sand and tread into place about 30mm deep. Set up screed rails to 40mm below finished paving level. Screed off paving sand to even surface.

**Step 2** Start laying the pavers along the longest straight edge of the area to be paved using a string line to keep them in position. If any of the pavers need to be cut - use a brick saw or angle grinder.

**Blitz Tipz:** A brick saw can be hired for about \$130 a day.

**Step 3** Excavate a 100mm trench around the outside edge of the paved area (unless up against a solid structure) and fill 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. This retains the paving sand in place.

**Step 4** 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.

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## Hebel Bench Seating

**Blitz Tipz:** Hebel. Hebel is a lightweight and easy-to-use aerated cement building product. It costs around \$36 for a 3000x600x75mm.

**Step 1** Ensure blockwork supports are completely level.

**Step 2** Cut Hebel slabs to size using a circular saw. You'll need a dust mask/respirator as well as goggles and ear protection.

**Step 3** Fix panels into place using Hebel adhesive.



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## Bagging

**Blitz Tipz:** Bagging is when you spread a thin layer of mortar or render mix over a wall using a sponge or hessian bag.

**Step 1** Mix up slurry of 6 parts yellow brickies sand, 1 part off-white cement, 1 part lime.

**Step 2** Moisten brick/blockwork to be bagged with fine mist.

**Step 3** Apply in long simple strokes with a large soft sponge, being careful not to overwork areas.

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## Water Feature

**Blitz Tipz :** In a feature like this, water losses through splash and evaporation will require the sump to be topped up regularly to avoid the sump running dry and burning the pump out. An alternative is to pay a licensed plumber to install a float valve that automatically maintains the water level.



## Retention Pit, Pump and Pipework

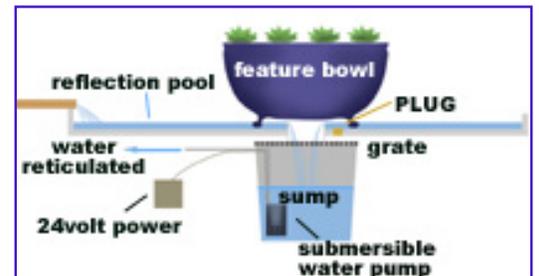
**Step 1** Locate retention pit and excavate to seat the pit below the galvanised trough for the reflective pond. Cut a notch out of the grate with an angle grinder to allow room to run 25mm hose from pump.

**Step 2** Place pump in pit, run low voltage wiring to transformer located indoors. Run 25mm pipe underground up to brick wall. **Blitz Tipz:** We used a Hozelock 3000 24V submersible pump which cost \$369.

Submersible pumps are available from waterfall, fountain and irrigation suppliers.

**Step 3** Chase channel for pipe up through brick wall to required height by running two parallel grooves with angle grinder and notching out with a cold chisel or chasing tool.

**Step 4** Run 30mm overflow pipe from top of pit to storm water.



## Pebble Splashback

**Step 1** Cut piece of fibre cement sheeting to suit and fasten pebble mosaic sheet with construction adhesive.

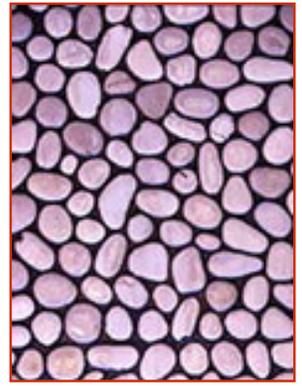
**Blitz Tipz:** We used pre-made sheets of white river rocks mounted on netting available from tile shops (\$10 each). Alternatively you can fix individual pebbles to the sheet using construction adhesive.

**Step 2** Grout between pebbles with waterproof, coloured grout.

**Step 3** Mitre cut reconstituted sandstone architrave with angle grinder to form frame and fix to wall with construction adhesive.

**Step 4** Run hose from pump up to tee piece outlet just under top of frame.

**Step 5** Fix splashback to wall using construction adhesive with outlets set to run over pebbles.



### Timber Channels

**Blitz Tipz:** When buying recycled timber, always ensure that it has been metal detected. We used 4m lengths of 150x100mm recycled hardwood.

**Step 1** Plane timbers back to good colour.

**Step 2** With a circular saw, make two parallel cuts 50mm apart and about 30mm deep down the centre of one of the 150mm wide faces of the timbers. This will form the two walls of the channel.

**Step 3** Working away from your body, knock out channels with a sharp chisel.

**Step 4** Locate and fasten channels in place.

**Step 5** Seal the timber with a waterproof sealant. We used Thompson's Sealant which is fast drying and clear.

### Paving Watercourse and Reflective Pond

**Blitz Tipz:** We used a galvanised trough which cost us \$260 to have made up by a metal fabrication yard.

**Step 1** Set galvanized trough in place above sump.

**Step 2** Set up two side rails with recycled hardwood.

**Step 3** Lay pavers on bed of mortar between timbers, stepped and slightly sloping down to reflective pond. Start from pond and work upwards.

**Step 4** Seal entire watercourse with waterproof sealant.

**Step 5** Place pot over drop-through hole in trough.



### Sandpit

**Step 1** Cut sleepers to form edging and nail together.

**Step 2** Drill 2 holes vertically down through each sleeper with 12mm auger and drive steel rods through into ground below. Use spare rod to punch rods below finished wood level.

**Step 3** Excavate pit to 300mm deep.

**Step 4** Line pit with weedmat and staple to inside of sleeper edging.

**Step 5** Fill with sand to finished level 50mm below top of edging.

**Blitz Tipz:** Ask for 'sandpit sand' at your nursery or landscape supplier for a coarse, sticky sand that kids love to play in. It's around \$5 a bag.

## Garden Beds:

Our garden beds were filled with organic soil mix. Plant the garden keeping plants at the same depth as they were in their containers. Water thoroughly. Spread a 50mm layer of mulch over the garden. Our main planting area was mulched with 20mm Cowra Gold pebbles. They're available from landscape suppliers at around \$120 a tonne.



## Our Plants:

Ajuga (*Ajuga reptans*), Bird of Paradise (*Strelitzia reginae*) and Narrow-leafed Bird of Paradise (*Strelitzia x parvifolia*), Flax (*Phormium tenax* 'Rubrum'), Triangle Palm (*Neodypsis decaryi*), Yucca (*Yucca elephantipes*), Louisiana Iris (*Iris* 'Going South'), Giant Strelitzia (*Strelitzia nicolai*), Echeveria (*Echeveria*), Cordyline (*Cordyline terminalis* 'Rubra'), Gynea Lily (*Doryanthes excelsa*), Festuca (*Festuca glauca*), Grass Tree (*Xanthorrhoea australis*).



**Ajuga**



**Bird of Paradise  
(*Strelitzia reginae*)**



**Bird of Paradise  
(*Strelitzia x parvifolia*)**



**Flax**



**Triangle Palm**



**Yucca**



**Louisiana Iris**



**Giant Strelitzia**



Echeveria

Cordyline

Gynea Lily

Festuca



**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 \$11,761. Considerable savings are possible using smaller plants, reducing the total cost to \$8,269.

- Most of the selected plants are readily available at nurseries or ask your nursery to order them for you.
- Most other materials are available from large hardware stores, building suppliers, or landscape suppliers.
- Pebble tile sheets and waterproof grout are available from tile centres, or you could elect to use pebbles from landscape yards.
- All tools used are commonly available for hire.

**Acknowledgments:** Design by Jamie Durie. Construction by the Blitz team.