

BACKYARD BLITZ

Edible Kitchen Garden



Have you ever dreamt of an exotic Lebanese courtyard, with the smell of herbs and spices wafting through the air? Well that's exactly what the Blitz team decided to create for Asma Sarkis. Asma arrived from Lebanon thirty years ago to make a fresh start. Life hasn't been easy and for the last 18 years she has raised her daughter Mona and sons Tony and John by herself. The garden was a thank you from her children for all the sacrifices she has made for them.

The design by Andrew Davies was inspired by traditional Lebanese gardens and picked up colours and styles from inside the house. Two circles of round pavers and gravel provided defined entertaining areas. One was covered with a metal pavilion on blue columns and set against a black and gold screen. A statue of Mary on a stone plinth against a gold and black dappled backboard completed the sense of sanctuary. Surrounding garden beds were planting with edible plants, herbs and spices. Screens provided privacy from the outside world and screened the service area.



What we did:

The area was cleared and levelled. Existing concrete was demolished and removed. Paving and screen areas were set out and the posts for the pavilion, screens and new fence were installed. Road base and sand for the paving areas was laid down followed by the pavers. Galvanised metal strips were put in place to define and contain the circular gravel areas. Shadecloth was nailed to the screens to provide privacy. A small stone garden bed with a stone plinth for the statue of Mary was built. Blue painted fibre-reinforced concrete columns surrounded posts supporting an ornate, metal arched roof. Terracotta pots and garden beds were planted out with a mixture of fruits, vegetables, herbs and spices.

Materials

Pots and Statue: Terracotta pots; terracotta statue; 900x1800x9mm compressed fibre cement board; Porters Duchess satin acrylic paint 'Gold'; and Feast and Watson 'Black Japan' oil stain. *Tools:* fibre cement cutter; tape measure; paintbrush; and sponge.

Screens: 100x100x3600mm rough sawn treated pine posts; 50x75mm DAR treated pine; Porter's Duchess satin acrylic paint 'Gold'; 1800mm wide, black, 50% shade cloth; rapid set concrete (40kg bags) and gang nails. *Tools:* String line; shovel; hammer; circular saw; chainsaw; spirit level; marker paint; paintbrush; sharp knife; and tape measure.

Paving: 300mm and 450mm plain concrete, anti-slip, stepping stone rounds; 300mm, 450mm and 600mm plain concrete stepping stone squares; 20mm river gravel; road base; paving sand; brickies' sand; cement; rapid set concrete; 100x3mm flat galvanised steel edging; and 50x50x300mm rough sawn stakes. *Tools:* Vibrating plate compactor; topsoil leveller; larry hoe or shovel; rake; brickie's trowel; screed; screed rails; wheelbarrow; spirit level; marker paint; sledge hammer; string line; and rubber mallet.

Statue plinth and informal garden edging: Bush rock (on site); brickie's sand; cement; concrete mix and rapid set concrete. (*Optional:* Black oxide.) *Tools:* Trowel; wheelbarrow; and larry hoe or shovel.

Pavilion: Pre-fabricated metal arch; fibre reinforced concrete columns; 100x100x3600mm rough sawn treated pine posts; rapid set concrete. *Tools:* Auger or shovel; spirit level; string line; tape measure; marker paint; chainsaw.

Backboard for statue: 900x1800x9mm compressed fibre cement board; Porters Duchess satin acrylic paint 'Gold'; Feast and Watson 'Black Japan' oil stain. *Tools:* Fibre cement cutter; tape measure; paintbrush; and sponge.

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 of a different size you will need to estimate the amount of materials you will require.

Note: On your plan it is important to note 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.

Getting started: any rubbish, old structures, paving, weeds etc should be removed and the site levelled. When 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 an organic clay breaker.

Step-by-step

Screens

Screens made of black shade cloth attached to a simple wooden structure were used to create a private area.

Step 1 Dig holes for posts at 1200mm centres to a depth of approximately 600mm deep.

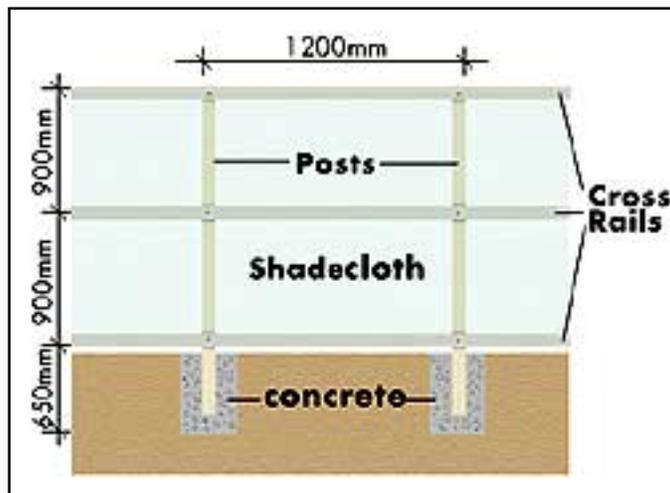
Step 2 To make a solid pad to sit the posts on, pour some rapid set concrete into the holes, watering and mixing into a slurry. Allow to set for at least 15 minutes (**Note:** we used only the equivalent of about 4 cups of concrete per hole).

Step 3 Place the end posts in their holes, then use a spirit level to ensure they are exactly vertical. Ensure end posts are parallel by setting up a string line. Half fill the hole with water and tip in a bag of rapid set concrete, watering as you go. The concrete should be filled to the top of the hole. Hold the post in position while the concrete firms (about 4 mins).

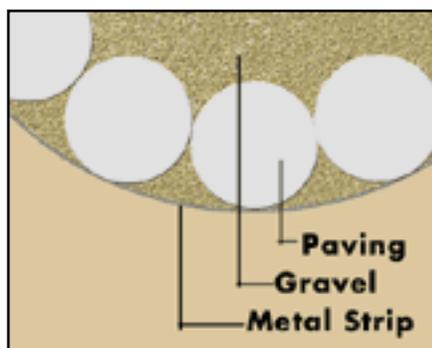
Step 4 Follow step 3 for the other posts, using the string line as a guide.

Step 5 Once the concrete has set (about 15 mins) and posts are firmly anchored, attach rails at 900mm centres with one at the base, halfway and the top. Check that the tops of the posts are level above the top rail. If any are too high they can be sawn off level with a chainsaw.

Step 6 Once the rails have been attached, the frames can be painted. We used gold paint to contrast with the black shade cloth. Once the paint is dry attach the shade cloth using gang nails. Fold cut ends over double prior to fastening. Have a helper hold the shade cloth taut as you nail until it is firmly fixed.



Paving



Clear the area to be paved and excavate if required. The depth of excavation should be the thickness of the paver plus 30mm sand plus 75-100mm compacted road base for pedestrian areas.

Step 1 To mark out a circular shape, hammer a wooden peg into the centre of your area and a nail hammered into this. Attach a length of string to the nail. The string should be the length of the radius of the circle. Tie a spray can of marker paint to the end of the string and mark out the circle on the ground. **Note:** Keep the peg in place to remark area once the road base and sand are in place.

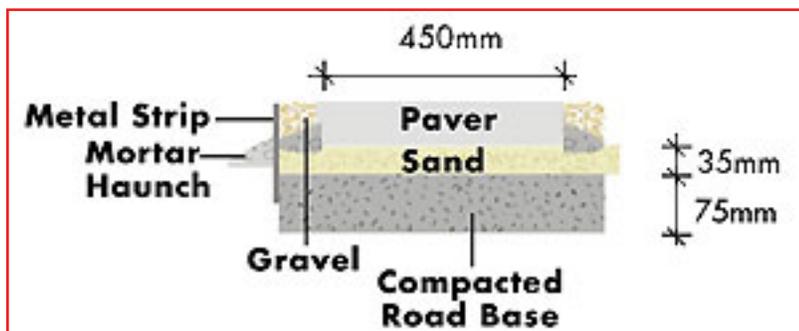
Step 2 Lay road base (approx 100mm deep). Compact to about 75mm with a vibrating plate compactor.

Blitz Tipz: If road base has dried out, sprinkle with water to increase compaction capability.

Step 3 Lay approximately 30mm of paving sand over the compacted road base. Use a screed or length of straight timber to level the sand.

Step 4 Remark the circle using the string, peg and marker paint. Place the 600mm circular pavers as the outermost ring of the circle, with the 450mm pavers on the inside of this circle (for the second paved area we had 450mm pavers as the outer circle and 300mm pavers as the inner circle).

Blitz Tipz: If the last paver in the circle doesn't fit, simply adjust spaces between the pavers or slightly enlarge the size of the circle.



Step 5 Place galvanised metal strip to define circle around outside of paving. To bend the strip hold it in place with wooden stakes. Hammer the stakes in so they sit just below the top edge of the metal.

Step 6 Infill around pavers and edge strip with mortar (4 parts brickies' sand to one part cement). This will stabilise the pavers and the metal edge. Finish mortar about 25mm below finished level to allow room for gravel.

Step 7 Once the pavers are set in place (overnight) the area can be backfilled with gravel and levelled.

Pavilion

We put wooden posts in position to support a pre-fabricated metal roof for our pavilion. Fibre-reinforced cement columns fit over the posts like sleeves.

Step 1 Clear and level the area for the pavilion and mark out the position of the corner posts using string lines and spray marker paint.

Step 2 Use an auger or shovel to dig the post holes 600mm deep. Pour a small amount of rapid set concrete into the hole to create a stable pad for the posts to sit on as in step 2 in Screens above.

Step 3 Place one corner post into position. Use a spirit level to ensure it is exactly vertical on two sides and concrete into place. Half fill the hole with water and tip in a bag of rapid set concrete, watering as you go. The concrete should be filled to the top of the hole. Hold the post in position while the concrete firms (about 4 mins). Ensure top of post is at correct height for placement of arch, cutting off level with a chainsaw if needed. This post will become the guide post.



Step 4 Install the three other posts one at a time. Post position needs to be very accurate to accommodate the metal roof. Set up string lines and check parallel and diagonal distances to ensure measurements are accurate within 5mm. When you are satisfied that each post is in position and vertical, set it in place with rapid set concrete as in step 3. You can then use a water level to mark level on each post, measure and mark the top of the posts and cut off level using a chain saw.

Blitz Tipz: Water level. Using a length of clear plastic hose filled with water (and free of bubbles), hold one end up until the water is level with the required point on the guide post. Have a helper hold the other end up against the next post and mark where the water finishes. Water naturally finds its own level so the level is the same at both ends.

Step 5 Slide the fibre-reinforced concrete columns onto the posts.

Blitz Tipz: Due to the height of the posts and the columns, it will be necessary to get help for this step, for this process (we had two people sliding the base of the column over the post while a third person supported the column while it was elevated. To do this we taped a length of timber to the column). Finally the rings (capitals) are placed around the column.

Step 6 The metal arch was pre-fabricated by a metalwork company and came with pre-drilled holes and welded stirrups.

Step 7 Bolt the stirrups to the top of the posts then with several helpers raise the arch above the posts and attach by bolting to the stirrups.

Step 8 Once the arch has been attached the rings (capitals) can be fixed into position at the top and the bottom of each column using construction adhesive. Once this is dry the columns can be painted (we chose 'Tuna' by Dulux paints).



Plinth and informal garden edge

We made a semi-circular garden bed with stone edging. In the centre of the bed we built a stone plinth to support our statue.

Step 1 Mark out the garden edge.

Step 2 Dig a trench about 150mm wide by about 100mm deep. Fill with concrete (mix according to instructions on bag) and trowel off to a rough level finish just below ground level.

Step 3 Position bush rocks to form the edge, pressing them into the concrete when you are sure about their placement.

Step 4 To make the stone plinth, excavate to about 100mm deep and wider than the desired plinth. Fill with concrete (mix according to instructions on bag) and trowel off to a rough level finish just below ground level.

Step 5 Mix some mortar of 4 parts brickies' sand to one part cement (you can add a little black oxide if you want). Start laying stones on a generous bed of mortar. Choose stones for each layer (or course) that are about the same thickness. Take care to stagger courses so that joints overlap.

Step 6 Use same mortar mix as in step 5 to fill in the gaps in the stone edging (this is known as pointing).

Step 7 For stability, and to fix the statue to the top of the plinth, we poured some rapid set concrete and a small amount of water (enough to create a thick slurry) into the base of the statue then quickly upended it into place on top of the plinth. Rotate into final position.



Backboard for statue

Step 1 Cut fibre cement to desired shape using fibre cement cutter.

Step 2 Screw sheet onto rails of screen.

Step 3 Paint sheet. We used gold acrylic paint.

Step 4 Dapple backboard by dabbing black stain on with a dry sponge.

Garden Beds

We mixed in organic garden mix with existing site soil and added cow manure to the vegetable garden. Ensure that plants are placed at the same depth in the soil as they were in their containers. We mulched by spreading a 50mm layer of organic mulch (we used eucalyptus woodchip mulch) over the garden beds and then watered.

Our plants

Meyer lemon (*Citrus limon* 'Meyer'), standard calamondin (*X Citrofortunella microcarpa*), dwarf cineraria (*Pericallis x hybrida*), spartan juniper (*Juniperus virginiana* 'Spartan'), birds nest fern (*Asplenium australasicum*), soft tree fern (*Dicksonia antarctica*), scaly tree fern (*Cyathea cooperi*), gristle fern (*Blechnum cartilagineum*), marshwood lavender (*Lavandula stoechas* 'Marshwood'), bay tree (*Lauris nobilis*), lilly pilly (*Syzygium australe* 'Select Form'), chinese star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*), pineapple sage (*Salvia elegans*), arabian coffee (*Coffea arabica*), guava cherry (*Psidium cattleianum*), grafted tomato (*Lycopersicon* 'Father Tom'), shallots (*Allium cepa*), strawberry (*Fragaria x ananassa*), lettuce 'Salad Bowl' (*Lactuca sativa* cvs), red mustard (*Brassica juncea*), oregano (*Origanum vulgare*), thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*), chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*), italian parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*), ornamental kale (*Brassica oleracea*), chocolate mint (*Mentha* sp.), 'Nellie Kelly' passionfruit (*Passiflora* 'Nellie Kelly').



scaly tree fern



soft tree fern



Meyer lemon



gristle fern



lavender



spartan juniper



Cost and availability

To provide an instant effect for television we used mature plants in our makeover. Our total cost was \$11,275. Considerable savings are possible using smaller plants, reducing the total cost to \$9723.

- Plants are readily available at most nurseries or you could ask your nursery to order them in for you. Species chosen may have to change to suit your area.
- Fibre reinforced concrete columns are available nationally from Guardian Building Products phone: (02) 9603 2444. Otherwise they are available or can be ordered through most major hardware stores (including Mitre 10, BBC, Bunnings and Hardware and General).
- Pots can be obtained from Decorator Terracotta, Sydney phone: (02) 9450 1944 or Motyaj, Sydney phone: (02) 9618 6866 or Melbourne phone: (03) 9555 0022. Both companies can advise where to purchase their products which are available nationally. The following products we used are from Decorator Terracotta:
 - Versailles Garland Planter (BP62) \$69.00;
 - Small Giant Citrus Planter (BP51) \$59.00; and
 - Four Seasons terracotta statue (Winter)(BST-10C) \$149.00.These prices include GST but freight is extra.
- Pre-fabricated metal arch was supplied by Pearce Magic Metals (0417 416 539) or you could look under Metal Workers in the Yellow Pages. Our cost for the arch was \$962.28.
- Porters Paint (Duchess Satin Finish Acrylic Paint, gold colour) is available nationally. Prices: 1 litre from \$28; 2 litres from \$46; 4 litres from \$85; Dulux Paint 'Tuna' (Weathershield X10 Low Sheen) available nationally. Prices: 1 litre from \$30, 4 litres from \$51, 10 litres from \$110; Feast Watson oil stain 'Black Japan' available nationally. Prices: 250ml from \$15, 500ml from \$20 and 1 litre from \$29.
- Most of the tools used are available for hire and the bobcat service can be hired for about \$400 a half day.
- Most other materials are available from large hardware stores, building suppliers and/or landscape suppliers.

Acknowledgements: Design by Andrew Davies, Icon Exteriors, phone (02) 9876 4632. Construction by the Backyard Blitz Team.