

BACKYARD BLITZ

Culinary Creation



Mark and Maureen Nicholls travelled the globe to meet each other. Mark is from England and Maureen is from Scotland, however they had to travel to Magnetic Island off the Queensland coast before they met and fell in love. A wedding in Scotland started their lives together while they entered into the great modern day lottery that is the residency application. Fate was kind and they were both accepted for Australian residency, becoming Australian citizens last year.



Design intent

The challenge to provide a garden suitable for a chef and creator of fine foods was the inspiration behind this design. Landscape designer Greg Bell from Rare Earth Landscape Designs, has created a backyard that will supply many ingredients for future parties and barbecues. A low-level entertaining deck provides an even surface for friends and family to relax upon. Plantings of fresh herbs, vegetables, espaliered citrus trees, and other culinary delights can be utilised straight from the garden into the new wood fired pizza oven. This is a garden we would all love to be invited to for a party.

Design ideas

This flat, rectangular garden has been lent some additional interest through the arrangement of the built structures. The deck is raised 300mm above ground to provide an elevated view of the garden. Timber climbing frames have been positioned diagonally to the rear wall creating microclimates suitable for growing plants requiring shelter. Setting your features at different heights and angles to the rest of the

garden provides interest and can enhance the feeling of space in the garden.

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 required amounts of materials.

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: Coordinating material delivery times and finding a location to store them requires careful planning. If you need to store materials on the roadway for a short time make sure they cannot travel into the stormwater system. Hay bales, stormwater pipes and bunding are all available at the local hardware and will help to prevent materials from fouling local creeks.

Getting started

A bobcat was used to remove the existing vegetation from the site and to drill holes for the decking posts. The heavy sandstone slab and wood fired pizza oven were carried into the garden with the bobcat.

Garden elements



Deck: Scotty built a great new entertaining deck adjacent to the house. The old timber ramp leading from the backdoor into the garden was replaced with a new landing, handrail and steps. Treated pine posts (90x90mm) installed vertically in ground in quick setting concrete support treated pine bearers (140x45mm) bolted to the posts with galvanised cup head bolts (10mm diameter, 150mm long). Joists (90x45mm) skew nailed to the top of bearers accommodate 90mm wide treated pine decking boards laid perpendicular to the joists and connected with spiral shanked, cup head stainless steel nails (65mm). Galvanised stair brackets attached to stringers (190x45mm) enable treads to be screwed in place at the appropriate height. The same construction principles described above were applied to the decking platform as well.

Blitz Tip: Space joists at 450mm centres when laying 90mm wide decking boards. If you are laying 70mm wide decking boards space joists at 400mm centres.



Paving: Nigel laid stepping stones and a paved area around the deck to provide a transition from the deck to the garden. A layer of roadbase spread to a depth of 130mm was moistened and compacted with a plate compactor before coarse washed river sand was spread over the top. Using aluminium rails and a screed, the sand was levelled and sloped away from the house to accommodate the large concrete pavers. A concrete haunch around the perimeter of the job locks the pavers together and prevents the bedding sand from washing out beneath the pavers. River gravel spread around the stepping stones provides an attractive contrast to the steppers.

Blitz Tip: When commencing paving, start along a long straight run to ensure an accurate pattern is maintained. Try to put cut pavers in areas that will not be easily observed, like corners and beneath stairs.



Wood fired oven: a beautiful wood fired oven takes centre stage in this culinary creation. Nigel built a supporting structure on a concrete footing comprised of Hebel blocks (600x200x200mm) laid in a u-shape five courses high, and a slab of sawn sandstone (1100x900x100mm). A cast iron and stainless steel wood-fired oven sits on top of the sandstone slab. The oven weighs about 200kg and does not require permanent fixing as a result. A stainless steel flue slides onto the chimney fitting and ensures that wood smoke is directed up and away from the cooking area.

Blitz Tipz: Both the sandstone and the oven were very heavy. If installing similar features in your garden, make sure you have a planned approach and adequate help to minimise the risk of injury or accident.

Garden beds: Jody improved the sandy site soil by incorporating an organic garden mix throughout the new planting areas to improve texture and nutrition levels. A layer of sugar cane mulch spread to a depth of 75mm will help to suppress weeds and maintain soil temperature and moisture content.

Blitz Tipz: Visit your local landscape supplier to view their range of mulches. Most suppliers will provide you with small sample bags of the types you like, so you can check their texture and colour in your own garden.

Espalier frames: Jamie constructed some timber espalier frames against which Jody trained some Citrus trees. Treated pine posts (H4, 90x90mm) installed vertically in ground in quick setting concrete support rails (H3, 90x45) for strength and galvanised wire connected with gripples for the training of plants.

Turf: the existing site soil become spongy as a result of constant foot and machinery traffic. Jamie added coarse washed river sand to the affected area before spreading turf underlay to a depth of 100mm. Turf underlay is typically comprised of 80% sand and 20% black soil to enable adequate drainage and nutrition to be made available to the plant.

Plants

Ornamental and fruit trees, herbs and vegetables are the basis of this culinary creation. Mark will be able to select produce from a range of sources to use in his cooking at both home and work.

Trees: lemon scented myrtle (*Backhousia citriodora*), crab apple (*Malus ioensis* 'Plena'), bay tree (*Laurus nobilis*), macadamia (*Macadamia integrifolia*), Washington navel (*Citrus sinensis* 'Washington Navel'), eureka lemon (*Citrus limon* 'Eureka'), emperor mandarin (*Citrus reticulata* 'Emperor'), Tahitian lime (*Citrus aurantifolia* 'Tahiti'), weeping mulberry (*Morus alba* 'Pendula')

Shrubs: rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), chillies (*Capsicum annum* 'Black Prince'), lemon grass (*Cymbopogon citratus*), assorted herbs and vegetables

Turf: kikuyu



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 \$10,960. This cost could be reduced to \$9,940 by using smaller plants.

Product details

- Beech wood fired ovens are available Australia wide. This model cooks any food type normally cooked on a barbecue as well as an oven. The standard oven cost \$3200 and are also available with an optional gas backup for an additional fee. Phone Beech Ovens on (07) 3397 0277 for your nearest agent.
- Nigel laid Bluestone pavers from Riverstone. They cost around \$65 per square metre depending on which state you live in. Phone Riverstone on (03) 9587 4446 for further details.
- The sandstone slab were sourced from Positive Earthmoving in Sydney, phone (02) 9652 1783. This slab weighed about 120kg and cost \$300.
- 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 are available from large hardware stores, building or landscape suppliers.
- All tools used are commonly available for hire including the mini loader and nail gun.



Getaway details

Accommodation:

Echoes Boutique Hotel
3 Lillianfels Ave
Katoomba
Phone: 02 4782 1966
Web: www.echoeshotel.com.au

River Deep Mountain High
2/187 Katoomba St Katoomba
Phone: 02 4782 6109
Web: www.rdmh.com.au



Acknowledgments

Design by Greg Bell from Rare Earth Landscape Designs

Phone 0404 043 788.

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

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