

BACKYARD BLITZ

Three Shades of Green



Not everyone has the luxury of a sunny, north-facing garden and when it comes to plant choice and maintenance, a small, damp and dark backyard can be a challenge.

Our Blitz team give three different solutions to three adjoining backyards that are dark and dingy with compacted soil and where the owners think it is impossible to grow anything. Everyone's backyard can have a corner like this and we build three cheap, easy to install and low maintenance gardens.

Our design

Peter Bakchak of Osmosis Design designed our three back gardens. They are great examples for anyone wanting to know how to use shade loving plants.

All three courtyard gardens were given a completely different look:



The modern garden

The owner had previously dug footings in a zig zag fashion and this gave us the starting point to build the Hebel garden retaining wall on these footings. The Hebel wall was waterproofed, bagged and painted and capped with hardwood to provide bench type seating.

When building a Hebel wall it is important to have a damp course as water through capillary action can destroy the wall. The first course is laid on a mortar bed to establish levels.

Nigel offset the joints in his charcoal paving to give a modern feel. White pebbles towards the rear of the garden added further visual interest and a change of texture underfoot.

Jamie and Nigel installed a water feature and pond. For the pond, Nigel placed river sand and screeded this flat before setting in a fibreglass shell. We filled the pond with dwarf papyrus.

Blitz Tipz: If you are putting in a pond or water feature and are concerned about safety with children, Jamie suggested two ways to overcome the problem: ponds can be filled with gravel to within 30-40mm of the surface of the water, or supports placed on the base to hold mesh just under the surface.

A splashback wall was built of blueboard. Two slits etched out of the boards are painted in a contrasting colour to the board and three brass fountains trickle water into the pond providing a sense of calm in the garden.

Bamboo fencing clad the unattractive fenceline and forms a great backdrop for the plants.

In keeping with the bold modern theme, the plants were chosen for their strong architectural form e.g. yucca and livistona.

The rosettes of leathery-leaved cardboard palm and the lime green, arching branches of bird's nest ferns look stunning. Additional height along the fence line is achieved with a combination of rhaps palm, fan palms and cabbage trees palms.



The Woodland Garden

In the dappled light of the second courtyard, we created a version of the English woodland garden with meandering paths and places to sit and with pretty low growing shrubs and perennials.

Stepping out of the house you are led to a fantastic entertaining area, with an octagonal hardwood deck, bench seats and a built-in barbecue. Leading off the landing is a series of concrete stepping stones to guide you through the garden. Flowering perennials such as *Nemesia* help to create the woodland feel.

The path leads down to a grove of *Austromyrtus 'Aurora'* which has lovely feathery foliage and magenta new growth. The garden beds are raised to create soft rolling mounds which enclose the spaces and produce a feeling of intimacy.

Each mound is planted out with several specimen trees and peppered below with tufting grasses and flowering perennials. A pink form of *Magnolia stellata* looks great set against the plum-coloured fence, as do the plum trees (*Prunus X blireana*) with their displays of double pink flowers throughout early Spring. Below their canopies are pretty windflowers (*Anemone x hybrida*).

Planted beside the paths to give added colour are small shrubs such as *Pieris japonica* and miniature *kurume azaleas*, both of which thrive in the dappled light.



The Bromeliad garden

We planned this garden to have lots of pizzazz and vibrant foliage colour. Scottie built a hardwood pergola as a feature adjacent to the back wall. Because of the hardwood we used stirrups to support the posts.

Nigel kept the existing paving but lifted some areas to enable us to build raised garden beds from recycled railway sleepers stacked two high. We put orchid mix with composted pine bark chunks (about 5-18mm) for growing the bromeliads and used the same orchid mix as mulch in the areas where we planted other foliage plants.

Then we planted the colourful foliage plants like bromeliads, cordylines, cliveas, gingers. Three wine barrels were placed in front of the wall.



Adapting plans 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.

Permits and approval: check with your local council regarding regulations about earthworks and drainage. If you are changing existing levels or installing drainage ensure no water run-off is directed toward neighbouring properties. Any water entering the storm water system must be free from debris and sediment.

The soil: The heavy clay soil was badly compacted and so to improve the soil, we added gypsum. This is a natural substance, which binds with the very tiny clay soil particles and turns them into larger, better-draining particles. Gypsum is available as fine granules to sprinkle on and dig into the soil, or as an easy-to-apply, spray-on liquid treatment. Don't apply gypsum when clay soils are wet; wait till they are 'damp-dry'. Tough clay soils may need several gypsum treatments over the years, not just one. Then we dug in plenty of organic material (compost, mulch, manure) and added a 75mm layer of mulch which breaks down and improves soil structure.

Plants

Modern garden

Yucca (Yucca elephantipes), fan palm (*Licuala ramsayi*), dracaena (*Dracaena marginata*), burrawang (*Macrozamia communis*), chinese fan palm (*Livistona chinensis*), cardboard palm (*Zamia furfuracea*), native ginger (*Alpinia caerulea*), calathea (*Calathea zebrina*), lady palm (*Rhapis excelsa*), bird's nest fern (*Asplenium australasicum*), cordyline (*Cordyline 'Rubra'*), flax lily (*Dianella 'Cassa blue'*), liriopse (*Liriopse muscari*, *Calathea (Calathea zebrina)*)

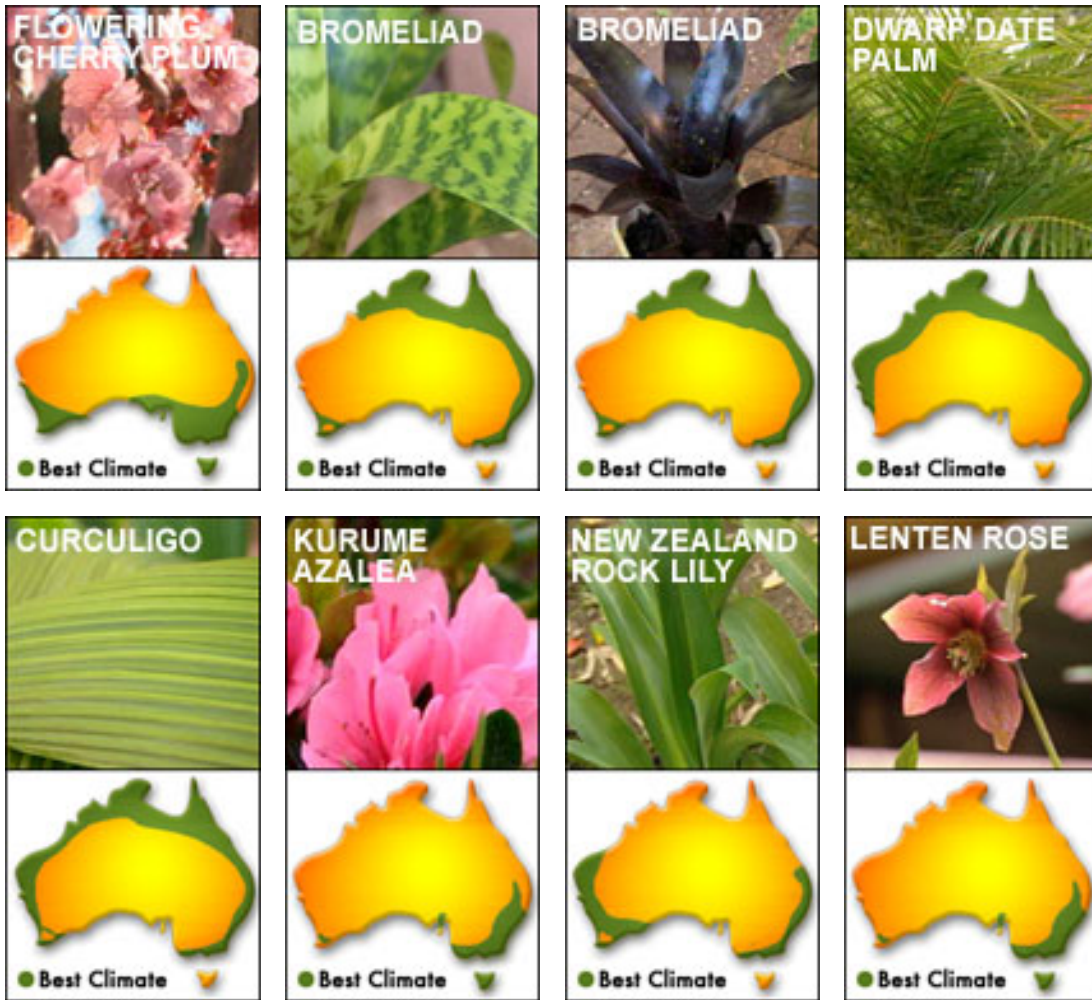
Woodland garden

Magnolia (Magnolia stellata), Cherry blossom (*Prunus cersaifera* cv) (*Prunus x blireana*), austromyrtus (*Austromyrtus 'Aurora'*, *Austromyrtus 'Blushing Beauty'*), azalea (*Azalea kurume*), lily of the valley (*Pieris japonica 'Christmas Cheer'*), flax lily (*Dianella* sp), liriopse (*Liriopse muscari*),

Bromeliad garden

Vriesea carinata, *Vriesea heiroglyphica*, *Vriesea carinota*, *Neoregelias*, native ginger (*Alpinia zerumbet 'Variegata'*), New Zealand rock lily (*Arthropodium* spp), clivia (*Clivia miniata*), swamp lily (*Crinum*

pedunculatum), curculigo (*Curculigo capitulata*), hellebores (*Helleborus orientalis*), variegated mondo grass (*Ophiopogon 'Stripey White'*)



Product details

- Most of the plants we used are readily available at, or can be ordered from, nurseries. Nurseries can also advise on similar varieties suited to your area. You may need to contact specialist nurseries for some plants. Your local nursery should be able to provide you with contacts.
- Most other materials are available from large hardware stores or building or landscape suppliers.
- All tools used are commonly available for hire, including the mini loader and the nail gun.
- Half wine barrels came from Barrel King Australia, 7/4 Polo Avenue, Mona Vale NSW 2103, phone 0416 176 652 www.barrelkings.com.au.
- Beefeater 4B S3000s Stainless steel barbecue (LP version) with roasting hood and gas cylinder supplied by Woodland Home Products, 3-5 Birmingham Avenue, Chester Hill, NSW. Phone: (02) 9724 3322 or visit www.woodlandhp.com

Cost

We used mature plants in this makeover to create an instant effect for television.

Modern garden

Our total cost for plants and materials was \$7,000. The use of smaller plants would have reduced the cost to \$6,000.

Woodlan garden

Our total cost for plants and materials was \$6,500. The use of smaller plants would have reduced the cost

to \$5,500.

Bromeliad garden

Our total cost for plants and materials for the was \$5,500. The use of smaller plants would have reduced the cost to \$4,500.

Holiday details

Accommodation:

The Sebel Kirkton Park
Oakey Creek Road, Pokolbin NSW 2320
Phone: (02) 4998 7680
Web: www.mirvachotels.com.au

Infuzions Restaurant
The Sebel Kirkton Park
Oakey Creek Road, Pokolbin NSW 2320
Phone: (02) 4998 7680
Web: www.mirvachotels.com.au

Tyrrells Winery
Broke Road, Pokolbin NSW 2320
Phone: (02) 4993 7000

Heavenly Hunter Massage
'Lomi Lomi' & 'Ka Huna' massage style
Contact Sally directly - Phone: 0438 010 359
Or book through - Sebel Kirkton Park
Oakey Creek Road, Pokolbin NSW 2320
Phone: (02) 4998 7680

Harrigan's Irish Pub & Accommodation
Hunter Valley Gardens
Broke Road, Pokolbin NSW 2320

Hunter Valley Cheese Company
McGuigans Complex
McDonalds Road, Pokolbin, 2320
Tel: (02) 4998-7744

Hunter Valley Classic Carriages
Phone: (02) 4991 3655
Mobile: 0409 327 193
Web: www.hunintervalleyclassiccarriages.com.au

Blue Tongue Beer Tasting
Hunter Resort
Hermitage Road, Pokolbin, NSW 2320
Phone: (02) 4998 7777

Peppers Creek
David Hook Wines
Cnr Broke & Ekerts Road, Pokolbin NSW 2320
Phone: (02) 4998 7121
Web: www.pepperscreek.com.au

Hunter Valley Chocolate Company
Hunter Valley Gardens
Broke Road, Pokolbin NSW 2320
Phone: (02) 4998 4000

Pepper Tree Wines
Halls Road, Pokolbin NSW 2320
Phone: (02) 4998 7539
Web: www.peppertreewines.com.au

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Woodlands Home Products for the Beefeater Barbecue, 3-5 Birmingham Avenue, Chester Hill, NSW. Phone: (02) 9724 3322 or visit www.woodlandhp.com

Our design by:
Osmosis Design
Phone: (02) 9344 4154
Web: www.osmosisgardens.com

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

For more Step by Step Constructions click here

