

# BACKYARD BLITZ

## Wedded Bliss



Dorothy and Gordon Prince have recently celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary. They have been married for 60 years. Dorothy has lived in the same house since she was 8 years old and both she and Gordon plan to remain there for the rest of their days. Gordon has done a lot to improve the house over the past 60 years but little has changed in the garden. This prompted their grandson, Nathaniel Hudson, to write to Backyard Blitz to ask for some help improving the garden and making it more livable for the whole family.



Landscape designer, Greg Bell from Rare Earth Landscape Design, has created a contemporary garden that suits both the style of the house and the lifestyle of the owners. Where narrow steps once led down to a concrete courtyard, a new timber deck provides a level entertaining area right outside the back door. A stylish sandstone and copper water feature is surrounded by ornamental grasses. Semi-mature specimens of crepe myrtle and frangipani will bring summer colour and fragrance to the garden, while a newly laid decomposed granite driveway provides a safe and level area to park the car. This simple design promotes elegance and style to complement a range of lifestyles.

## 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.

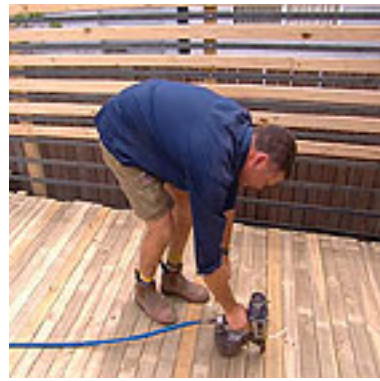
Permits and approval: Some structures in the garden require approval from your local council prior to construction. Discuss the proposal with the council and with your neighbours before you start work. It will smooth the building process and may even save you money.

## Getting started

A bobcat was employed to remove unwanted vegetation and to create subgrade levels for the new driveway and lawn area. Jody pruned existing shrubs and heavy materials were carted into the backyard following the initial setout.

## Materials

**Deck:** Scotty built a great new entertaining deck leading from the rear of the house. Galvanised stirrups were dynabolted to the existing concrete slab and treated pine posts (90x90mm) bolted vertically in place. Treated pine bearers (140x45mm) were bolted to the posts with galvanised cup head bolts (10mm diameter, 150mm long). Joists (90x45mm) were skew nailed perpendicular to the top of bearers. 90mm wide treated pine decking boards laid perpendicular to the joists were connected with spiral shanked, cup head stainless steel nails (65mm). Scott created a curved edge to one side of the deck by cantilevering the joists and decking boards slightly - seek advice from a qualified builder or architect before you incorporate this into your design. **Blitz Tipz** Space joists at 450mm centres when laying 90mm wide decking boards. If you are laying 70mm wide decking boards space joists at 400mm centres.



**Driveway:** Nigel upgraded a bare earth driveway into the carport by laying recycled roadbase covered with decomposed granite. The bobcat excavated the loose soil and brought in recycled roadbase. Nigel spread and compacted the roadbase (150mm thick) with a vibrating plate compactor before spreading and compacting gold coloured, decomposed granite (50mm thick) pre-mixed with off-white cement for a stabilising effect. **Blitz Tipz** For pathways and pedestrian areas a 100mm layer of compacted, decomposed granite, stabilised with off-white cement is sufficient thickness.



**Water feature:** Jamie built a sandstone and copper water feature that is both stylish yet elegantly understated. A prefabricated fibreglass shell (1200x1200x300mm) buried in the garden houses a large sandstone slab (1800x500x50mm) and sandstone block (800x400x400mm). Water is forced through a copper pipe (12mm) from a low-voltage submersible pump into a copper trough. The specially fabricated copper emitter distributes an even sheet of water down the face of the upright sandstone slab. **Blitz Tipz** Pieces of sandstone of this size are extremely heavy and potentially dangerous. Adequate bracing is essential to avoid overturning.

**Garden beds:** Jody incorporated a composted organic soil mix into the existing sandy soil to improve the soil's water holding capacity and provide nutrients for the plants. Pruning some of the existing shrubs will improve their vigour and also improve visibility in the garden. An organic mulch of forest fines spread to a depth of 75mm will help to maintain soil temperature and moisture levels. **Blitz Tipz** When creating planting areas under trees, be careful not to dramatically increase soil levels around the root system of the tree.

**Brick edging:** Common bricks were laid to form an edge between the new lawn and a decomposed granite BBQ area. Nigel mixed a 4:1 sand and cement mix and laid the bricks into a bed of mortar. A 10mm mortar joint between each brick will prevent grass runners from entering the decomposed granite area. **Blitz Tipz** Allow 5 bricks per lineal metre when ordering bricks for your brick edging.



## Plants

Fragrant and free flowering trees, shrubs and ornamental grasses combine to create a relaxing, easy-care garden.

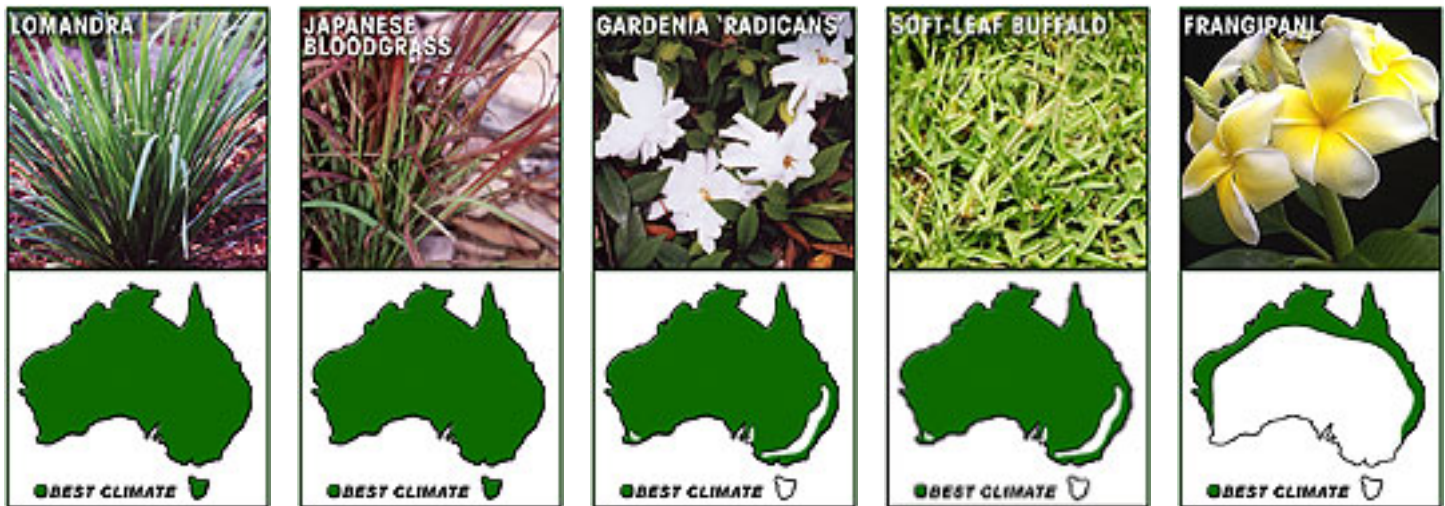
**Trees and tall accent plants:** crepe myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*), frangipani (*Plumeria acutifolia*), grass tree (*Xanthorrhoea johnsonii*)

**Shrub:** gardenia (*Gardenia augusta 'Radicans'*)

**Grasses:** Japanese bloodgrass (*Imperata cylindrica 'Rubra'*), fountain grass (*Pennisetum alopecuroides*), pennisetum 'Black Lea' (*Pennisetum alopecuroides 'Black Lea'*), lomandra (*Lomandra longifolia*), poa 'Kingsdale' (*Poa poiformis 'Kingsdale'*)

**Turf:** Soft-leaf buffalo





## 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 \$9984. This cost could be reduced to \$8834 by using smaller plants.

## Product details

- Decomposed granite costs from \$75 per tonne with cement pre-mixed.
- Sandstone pieces were sourced from Gosford Quarries on the NSW central coast phone: (02) 4340 1158. They cost \$300 each.
- Water feature components are available from specialist nurseries or from our source - Contour Ponds and Pumps in Sydney, phone: (02) 9690 2600.
- Decking timbers are all preservative treated pine. This deck would cost \$1850 to build yourself.
- Steel strapping cost about \$2.70 per lineal metre and is available through hardware stores and metal manufacturers.
- 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

Sails Apartments  
7-9 Head St  
Forster, NSW  
Phone: (02) 6555 3700

The Little Snail Restaurant  
Cnr West & Wallis St  
Forster, NSW  
Phone: (02) 6555 6355

Boomerang Rainforest Tours  
Web: <http://users.hardnet.com.au/ppmartin>  
Phone: (02) 6554 0757

## 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).

For more Step by Step Constructions click [here](#)



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Details on the fact sheets are accurate at the time of publishing, however prices and contact information are not updated and may change.