

BACKYARD BLITZ

Garden Tapestry



Modern life doesn't suit Yvan Valenduc. Yvan has Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS), which was triggered during his work with chemicals as a dental technician. Yvan's illness means certain chemicals trigger severe physical reactions and greatly limit his movements and where he can live (he has no sensitivity to floral perfumes).

Landscape designer Richard Stutchbury from Red Dust Designs has created a garden that's in sympathy with Yvan's lifestyle. Yvan's love of tapestry is reflected in the patchwork patterns of paving and planting in the new garden while low allergy plants and materials have been selected to create a contemplative space away from the modern world. Sheets of granite have been shaped to create a dramatic cascade for a central water feature and a large flowering magnolia within the deck will provide a scented canopy in the future.

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.

Permits and approvals: Check with your local council regarding regulations about water features. If your water feature is deeper than a certain depth, you may be required to erect a pool fence around it. The depths vary between council areas across Australia.



Materials

This garden presented a real challenge as appropriate chemical and allergy free materials and plants had to be used to avoid damaging Yvan's health.

If you have concerns over any materials you intend to use in your garden most suppliers are happy to discuss their products or recommend appropriate alternatives depending on your needs.

Decking: the native hardwood (coastal blackbutt) selected for this job was milled specifically to size for this project and had no chemical treatment. Galvanised adjustable piers were installed in ground in concrete. Bearers (200x50mm), joists (100x50mm) and decking (90x20mm) were combined to improve and redefine the existing deck. Stainless steel spiral shanked nails were used to nail down boards and galvanised cup head bolts connected structural timbers. Decking boards and all timbers installed inground were coated with boiled linseed oil to for protection against fungal attack and to enhance the natural colours of the timber. **Blitz Tipz** Timber that has been chemically treated will be branded to indicate the chemical that's been used.



Water feature: a food grade polyethylene stock trough was laid in a sand lined hole dug to shape in the garden. All voids were backfilled with coarse washed river sand. A sheet of carved granite was suspended across the trough and supported by sandstone blocks on either side. A cascade of water runs over the granite feature into the pond below and is recirculated by a low voltage submersible pump.

A low voltage transformer housed within the adjacent pool filter box is plugged into an existing power point.

Blitz Tipz Stone suppliers often have large offcuts or one-off pieces of stone available for features such as this. Check the classified ads in your local paper for recycled building materials or waste from demolition or development sites.

Timber screens: simple timber screens were built using chemical free hardwood posts (100x100mm). All timbers used inground require protection against fungus and insects. As no petroleum-based chemicals could be used, a coating of boiled linseed oil was applied to each post to provide some limited protection (it will need to be reapplied regularly and all timber will need regular visual inspections to protect against termites). Aged, hardwood fence palings were nailed into hardwood rails (70x35mm) housed into the posts in a lattice pattern.

Blitz Tipz The most critical area to protect on hardwood posts is 300mm above and below ground level. When applying timber preservatives ensure this zone is well covered.

Paving: Carpet Stone pavers (40mm) laid over compacted road base (100mm thick) and paving sand provide entry points from the deck into the garden. Strips of Carpet Stone have been laid into a rapid setting sand and cement mix to form decorative garden edges. All paving is haunched with sand/cement mix to hold it in place and a grout of 7mm Riverina red gravel has been swept through the top surface of the pavers. **Blitz Tipz** Sweeping a 4:1 sand/cement mix through the top of the pavers after they are laid will help reduce the likelihood of weeds growing between the pavers. Pavers need to be thoroughly cleaned after using this technique as the cement will stain the pavers if it is not washed off completely.



Decorative paths: Riverina red gravel (7mm) and brown decomposed granite have been spread evenly over a compacted road base subgrade to create panels of an informal pathway. Both these materials are best laid in layers at least 75mm deep. **Blitz Tipz** Some landscape suppliers will pre-mix cement through their decomposed granite mix to enable it to form a more stable pathway after it is compacted. Decomposed granite with cement mixed through costs about \$65 per tonne.

Garden seat: a low, curving brick wall was laid using extruded common bricks over a concrete footing. The brickwork was then bagged using a 4:1 sand/cement mix and a capping of precut granite laid into a bed of tile adhesive on top of the brickwork to provide a bench seat. **Blitz Tipz** Use a garden bench as a guide to the correct proportions for the seat height and depth. About 400mm high and 400mm wide is a comfortable size.

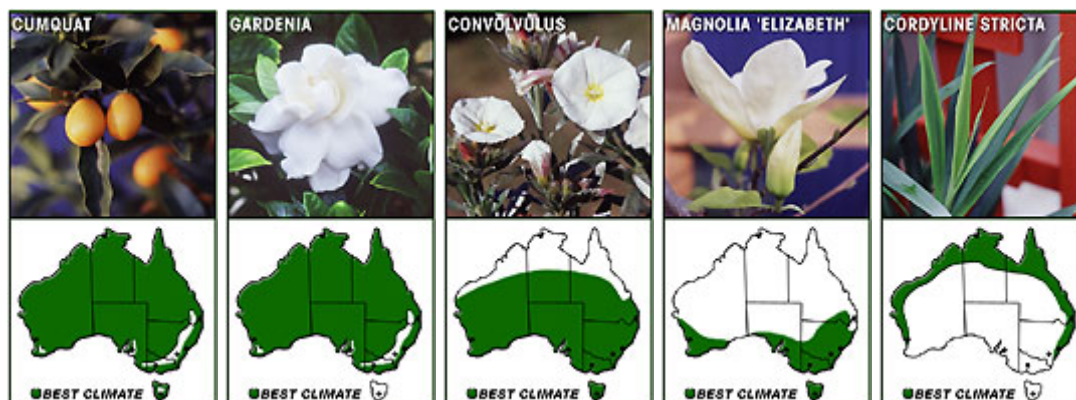
Garden beds: the existing site soil (a sandy loam) was improved by incorporating screened mushroom compost throughout the garden beds.

A layer of leaf litter mulch was spread to a depth of 75mm to retain soil moisture and suppress weed growth.

Blitz Tipz Improve the water holding capacity of sandy soils by incorporating organic matter into the soil.

Paint: the colourful palette of paints was selected from the Murobond range to be low in volatile organic chemicals. The timber screens were painted orange with a low sheen acrylic 'Bordeaux'. The deck and existing fence were painted blue with 'Marlin' low sheen acrylic.

Plants



Trees: magnolia (*Magnolia* 'Elizabeth'), cumquat (*Fortunella japonica* 'Nagami'), lemon (*Citrus limon* 'Myer')

Feature plants: sago palm (*Cycas revoluta*), cordyline (*Cordyline stricta*)

Shrubs: coast rosemary (*Westringia fruticosa*), murraya (*Murraya paniculata*), gardenia (*Gardenia augusta* 'Florida'), convulvulus (*Convolvulus cneorum*), blue marguerite (*Felicia amelloides*)

Climbing plants: star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*), potato vine (*Solanum jasminoides*)

Groundcovers: mondo grass (*Ophiopogon japonicus*), lirioppe (*Lirioppe muscari* 'Evergreen Giant')

Cost and availability

We used mature plants in our makeover to create an instant effect for television. As a result, our total cost for plants and materials was \$11,582. This cost could be reduced to \$9545 by using smaller plants.

Product details

- Food grade polyethylene stock troughs are available from some large hardware outlets and rural supply centres like Elders Stockmans in Sydney. Phone: (02) 9651 1313 (head office).
- Boiled linseed oil costs about \$15/litre from hardware stores. Timber Solutions creates a range of low allergy timber preservatives for most situations. Phone: (02) 4872 1380.
- Galvanised, adjustable piers form part of the 'Duragal' flooring system. Phone: Onesteel Direct on 1800 101 141 for distributors in your area.
- Carpet Stone pavers from Daisho Pty Ltd cost from \$110 per square metre. They are available in straight, fan-shaped and circular patterns. Phone: (02) 9264 1465 (head office).
- Murobond paints have a variety of interior and exterior paints. Phone: (02) 9906 7299 for information on prices, colours and for advice on low allergy paints.
- 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 airless spray gun and the nail gun.

Getaway details

Accommodation:
Big Bell Farm
1666 Kangaroo Valley Road
Kangaroo Valley NSW 2577
Phone: (02) 4465 1628
Website: www.ozemail.com.au/~brunohenke

MCS information

For more information about Multiple Chemical Sensitivity contact:
The Australian Chemical Trauma Alliance Inc
309 East Bonville Road
Bonville NSW 2441
Phone: (02) 6653 4531 (10am-7pm, 7 days)
Website: <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~actall>

Acknowledgments

Design by Richard Stutchbury of Red Dust Designs
Phone: (02) 9973 2807

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



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