

# BACKYARD BLITZ

## Family Fun



The naturally conceived quintuplets (five children from one pregnancy) of Brent and Merryn Laverack were an unexpected surprise to their parents and older sisters. Cameron, Amanda, Kristelle, Neroli and Andrew absorb most of their parents' energy and leave little time or money for gardening. John Laverack, the grandfather of the quins, has witnessed the extraordinary events in Brent and Merryn's life.

John knows first hand that the birth of the quins has meant endless joy for their parents. However, it has also been a considerable challenge and has caused some financial stress. John contacted Channel 9, which has supported the family in the past, and it was suggested that he ask the Backyard Blitz team for some help.

Landscape designer, Andrew Davies, from **dig**, has created a family-friendly garden space that combines active play spaces for the quins, relaxing areas for tired parents and chill out zones for the older girls. The removal of a lattice balustrade at the rear of the house makes the garden more accessible and welcoming. The construction of a low sandstone retaining wall and central steps will encourage visitors to the house out into the garden. A shaded, paved area next to the pool enables supervision of the children at play and doubles as an escape area that is perfect for a drink at the end of a long, hard day. Timber screens create rooms within the garden and disguise the location of future extensions to the house.



### 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 your proposal with your neighbours and the council before you start work. It will smooth the building process and may even save you money.

### Getting started

A bobcat was used to remove unwanted vegetation and to create sub-grade levels for the retaining walls and lawn areas. Heavy materials were transported into the backyard following the initial set-out.

### Materials

**Sandstone retaining walls:** Nigel fashioned sandstone ballast into rough blocks to create a series of rustic retaining walls. Blocks were laid level into a shallow trench filled with a 4:1 sand and cement mortar mix. A second course was bedded into a layer of mortar and the tops of the blocks trimmed level. Insufficient drainage is a common cause of retaining wall failure, so Nigel left weepholes between blocks to enable water to move out from behind the wall. An agricultural pipe (65mm) with a geotextile fabric sock was installed behind the wall and topped with blue metal



(20mm). This provides a void allowing water to move from behind the wall into the storm water system.

**Blitz Tipz:** Low sandstone walls depend primarily on their weight to stay in place. As a result, it is important that the base is of sufficient thickness to support the blocks above. Make the base of the wall at least a third as thick as the wall is high.

**Privacy screens:** Scott built some timber screens to disguise the garden shed and frame views to the new plantings. Treated pine posts (H4, 90x90mm) installed in-ground in rapidset concrete support horizontal rails (H3, 70x45mm), which in turn support vertical rails (H3, 140x45mm) to create a grid-like screen.

**Blitz Tipz:** Partial screens create interest and can provide more depth than a solid screen, as they allow glimpses to the garden behind.



**Sleeper deck:** A low-level sleeper deck leads from the lawn onto some stepping stones and into the pool enclosure. Jamie used treated pine sleepers (200x100x2400mm) as both joists and decking boards. The weight of the whole deck nailed together with 150mm galvanised deck spikes holds it in place on a bed of compacted roadbase and negates the need for posts.

**Blitz Tipz:** Treated pine sleepers are excellent for structural work in the garden. They are easy to work with because they are regular in size, and they're appropriate for in-ground use.



**Arbour:** an Australian-style garden arbour combines posts and beams at different heights with a waterproof shadesail, creating an informal shaded area by the swimming pool. Posts (H4, 90x90mm) installed in-ground in quick setting concrete support beams (H3, 140x45mm) bolted in place with 10mm galvanised cup head bolts. A UV resistant shadesail was stretched between the posts on stainless steel d-shackles, turnbuckles and chain.

**Blitz Tipz:** Use a temporary nail beneath the beam to hold the beam in place as you clamp it prior to drilling holes for the bolts.



**Garden beds:** the power of the bobcat was used to incorporate an organic soil mix (with added gypsum) through the compacted site soil. A 75mm layer of leaf litter mulch spread over the garden beds will insulate the soil and help to retain soil moisture. Roocycle plastic edging (100x8mm) connected to hardwood pegs defines the shape of the lawn and prevents grass runners from entering the garden bed. **Blitz Tipz:** Many landscape suppliers can advise on appropriate soil improvers for your specific soil type.

**Stepping stones:** informal concrete stepping stones lead from the sleeper deck through the pool gate. They were also laid along the front of the new sandstone retaining wall. Bedded into 4:1 sand and cement mortar, the steppers are spaced according to a comfortable child-size step.

## Plants

Native trees and shrubs have been mixed with attractive exotics to create a garden full of form and colour with a distinctly Australian flavour.

**Trees:** dracaena (*Dracaena marginata*), lilly pilly (*Acmena smithii* var. *minor*), cordyline (*Cordyline australis*), blueberry ash (*Elaeocarpus reticulatus* 'Prima Donna'), scrub cherry (*Syzygium australe*), willow myrtle (*Agonis*

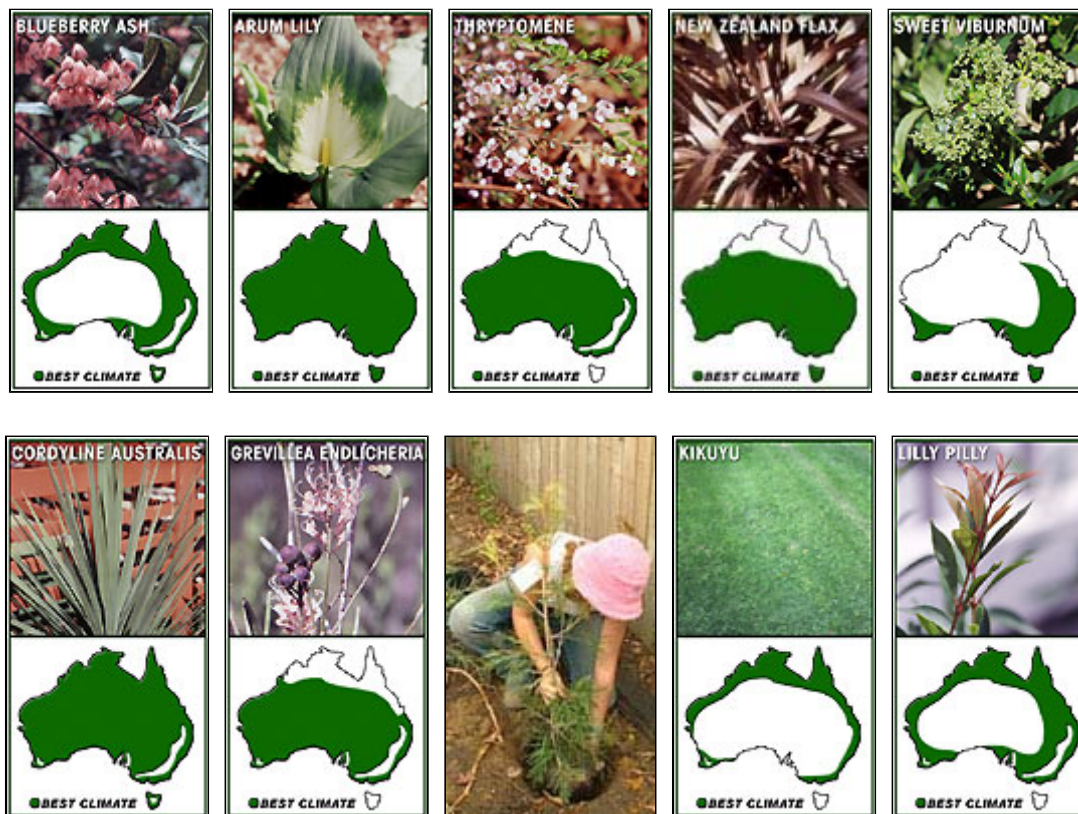
*flexuosa* 'After Dark')

**Shrubs:** viburnum (*Viburnum odoratissimum*), helichrysum (*Helichrysum petiolare* 'Limelight'), New Zealand flax (*Phormium tenax* 'Anna Red') thryptomene (*Thryptomene saxicola*), cordylines (*Cordyline rubra*, *C. glauca*), grevilleas (*Grevillea* 'Moonlight', *G. endlicheriana*), metrosideros (*Metrosideros* 'Dalese', *M.* 'Fiji Fire')

**Ferns:** black tree fern (*Cyathea medullaris*)

**Perennials:** arum lily (*Zantedeschia aethiopica* 'Green Goddess'), dampiera (*Dampiera diversifolia*), lomandra (*Lomandra longifolia* 'Tanika')

**Turf:** Kikuyu (*Pennisetum clandestinum*)



### 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 \$12,936. The use of smaller plants would have reduced the cost to \$8,291.

### Product details

- Sandstone ballast costs about \$75 per square metre from Kellyville Landscape Supplies. Phone (02) 9629 4167 for more information.
- Roocycle plastic edging is available in a range of widths and thicknesses from Moodie Marketing Pty. Ltd. Phone (02) 9816 1133 for product details.
- Austral Paradise pavers laid beneath the shaded arbour cost about \$28 per square metre. Phone (02) 9830 7700 for more details.
- Stepping stones from Wilsonstone pavers cost \$12.40 each. Phone (02) 4943 5479 for more information.
- H4, 90x90mm treated pine posts cost about \$15 per lineal metre at good hardware outlets.
- 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 airless spray gun and the Kanga mini excavator.



### Getaway details

Outrigger Sun City Resort  
Cnr Gold Coast Hwy & Ocean Ave  
Surfers Paradise  
Web: [www.outrigger.com.au](http://www.outrigger.com.au)  
Phone: (07) 5584 6000

### Dreamworld

Dreamworld Parkway  
Coomera  
Web: [www.dreamworld.com.au](http://www.dreamworld.com.au)  
Phone: (07) 5588 1122

### Hard Rock Cafe

Cnr Gold Coast Hwy & Cavill Ave  
Surfers Paradise  
Web: [www.hardrock.com](http://www.hardrock.com)  
Phone: (07) 5539 9377

### Acknowledgments

Design by **dig**  
Phone: (02) 9416 6022

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

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



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