

BACKYARD BLITZ

Summer Stunner



Forrest Wiles loves his teacher. So much so that he nominated her for a Backyard Blitz makeover to thank her for teaching him how to read and write. This generous nomination by Forrest meant that Louise Allen, her husband Sam and their son Tom spent two days away relaxing while the Backyard Blitz team busied themselves in their backyard.

Landscape designer Matthew Cantwell from Secret Gardens of Sydney has created a colourful garden filled with summer-flowering plants. A level area was created in the sloping rear lawn. Here was the place to site a bench. The area is linked to a rear deck by a curved stone and pebble pathway. A new lawn and some mature specimen trees have turned this average backyard into a park-like oasis.

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 earthworks. If you are changing existing levels or installing retaining walls you need to ensure no water run-off is directed toward a neighbour's property. It may be necessary to install new drainage systems to capture excess water.

Materials

Sandstone flagging and stepping stones: two areas of sawn sandstone flagging (50mm thickness) were laid over a compacted roadbase and paving sand base. These created an informal landing beneath the decking steps and also a level area for the timber bench. A dry mix of 3:1 sand and cement was swept through the gaps to bond the stone together. A rapid set mortar haunch was laid along the edge of the path to retain the sandstone and the sand beneath.

Hydrasplit sandstone blocks (250x130mm) were laid as step risers with a Nepean River pebble pathway (10mm and 18mm) retained by treated pine timber edging (120x19mm) and hardwood pegs (450x50x50mm).



Blitz Tipz To create a curved treated timber edge saw a third of the way through the timber at regular intervals and bend around hardwood pegs before nailing into place.

Privacy screen and bench: a contemporary screen around a deep bench was constructed with steel strapping and treated timbers. Treated pine posts (100mm diameter) were installed in-ground in concrete and supported galvanised steel strapping (50mm x 1.6mm) connected horizontally with screws. The steel strapping is not widely available but may be sourced from specialty metal suppliers or ordered in through your local hardware. An internal framework of treated pine bearers (H3, 140x45mm) combined with decking boards (H3, 90x22mm) formed the private and sun soaked relaxation bench. All timbers were connected with galvanised nails and cup head bolts. **Blitz Tipz** When constructing your screen and bench erect the screen so that it provides privacy while allowing filtered sun and breeze to pass into the relaxation space.

Timber retaining wall: a simple, low retaining wall was built along the fence line to enable the rear lawn to be levelled. A 200mm high wall was built using treated pine posts (H4, 90x90mm) installed in-ground in concrete with treated pine sleepers (H4, 200x75x2400mm) connected with cup head bolts. A similar wall of treated pine sleepers connected to the screen posts retained the fill beneath the privacy screen and bench. **Blitz**



Tipz Adequate drainage behind retaining walls is essential. Always have weep holes to enable moisture to move out from behind the wall and backfill with granular material like blue metal to allow water to run away in an agricultural pipe.



Pebble pathway and steps: hydrasplit sandstone flagging (230x150x400mm) was laid into a mortar bed to form a sloping path. Where the path was too steep for safety a sandstone block was laid as a step. Pebbles (10mm and 18mm) spread to a depth of 75mm provide a sensual yet practical path that provides sound as it is walked upon.

practical path that provides sound as it is walked on. A treated pine timber edge (120x19mm) retains the pebbles in place. **Blitz Tipz** When designing a pathway through the garden, look for the 'goat track' - that is the worn area that is most commonly walked along. To ensure the path is used, locate it along the goat track.

Lawn area: having stripped the old turf with the bobcat, turf underlay (80% sand, 20% topsoil) was spread to a depth of 50mm and levelled. Soft leaf buffalo ('Sir Walter') was laid and watered in well. **Blitz Tipz** If laying turf on a slope, ensure the slope is not greater than 1:3 (that means for every 3m along the slope it falls 1m vertically) for ease and safety of maintenance.

Paint: new garden elements were painted with the same colours used in the house. Bristol Weathertough Forte 'Cobalt' was used on the fences and timber screens. **Blitz Tipz** Airless spray guns make painting large flat surfaces quicker and provide a more even result. Discuss your project with an expert before hiring this equipment as it uses more paint than a brush or roller and may affect your overall cost.

Garden beds: existing site soil was improved by digging in an organic soil mix. Treated pine edging was installed around all garden beds. A eucalyptus mulch was spread to a depth of 75mm to retain soil moisture and to suppress weeds. An interesting planter was made from a rainwater tank (800mm diameter). Holes were punched in its base and it was filled with potting mix. **Blitz Tipz** When using unconventional containers as planters ensure several drainage holes are punched or drilled into the bottom of the container.

Plants

A colourful combination of trailing ground covers, sprawling climbers and medium-sized trees and shrubs will create an intimate space with year-round interest.

Trees: callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana* 'Redspire')

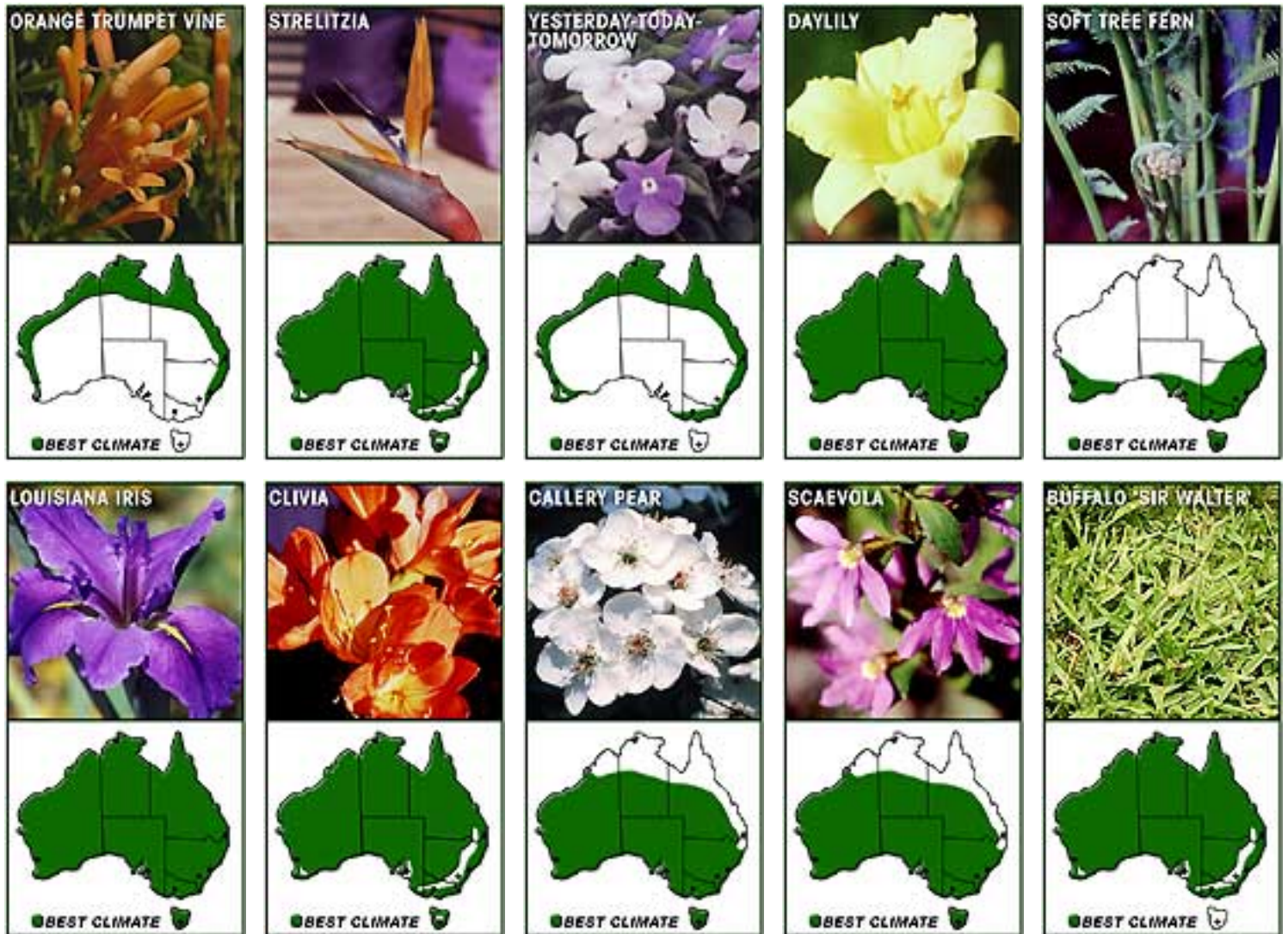
Shrubs and perennials: bird-of-paradise (*Strelitzia reginae*), sweet viburnum (*Viburnum odoratissimum*), kangaroo paw (*Anigozanthos* 'Bush Gem'), soft tree fern (*Dicksonia antarctica*), agapanthus (*Agapanthus praecox* subsp. *orientalis*), clivia (*Clivia miniata* Belgian Hybrids), daylily (*Hemerocallis* Hybrid), African daisy (*Arctotis* 'Flame'), yesterday-today-tomorrow (*Brunfelsia australis*, also sold as *B. latifolia* and *B. bonodora*), Louisiana iris (*Iris* 'Clyde Redmond')

Climbers and groundcovers: orange trumpet vine (*Pyrostegia venusta*), Spanish shawl (*Heterocentron elegans*), scaevola (*Scaevola aemula* 'Fandancer')

Annuals: French marigold (*Tagetes patula*)

Lawn: 'Sir Walter' soft buffalo





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 \$10,684. This cost could be reduced to \$8055 by using smaller plants.

Product details

- Small rainwater tank cost \$215 and was supplied by City Rainwater Tanks in Sydney. Phone: (02) 9971 9090 for more details and availability.
- Sawn sandstone flagging and hydrasplit sandstone blocks were sourced from Bundanoon Sandstone, phone: (02) 9637 2300. Prices and quality of sandstone varies greatly so contact suppliers for further details.
- Galvanised steel strapping in a variety of thicknesses and widths can be sourced from leading hardware outlets or look under 'Metal Merchants' in the Yellow pages for suppliers. The 50mm wide, 1.6mm thick steel we used cost about \$3 per lineal metre.
- Large nurseries and landscape suppliers have a range of decorative gravels and pebbles in different sizes and colours starting from about \$40 per cubic metre. Check under 'Landscape

Supplies' in your *Yellow Pages*.

- 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

Chifley on Northbourne
102 Northbourne Avenue
Braddon ACT 2601
Phone: 1800 065 064

Tours

Canberra Tour City Sight Seeing
(Duration 1hour 20 mins)
Departs from Shop 1 Melbourne Building
Northbourne Avenue
Canberra ACT 2604
Phone: 0500 505 012 (local cost) or 0412 988 207
Websites: www.city-sightseeing.com or www.canberratourism.com.au

Questacon
National Science and Technology Centre
King Edward Terrace
Canberra ACT 2604
Phone: (02) 6270 2855
www.questacon.edu.au
Open 9 - 5 every day \$10 adults \$5 kids

Acknowledgments

Design by Secret Gardens of Sydney; phone: (02) 9365 6533. Construction by the Backyard Blitz team (all gardens are a gift from Backyard Blitz).

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

