

# BACKYARD BLITZ

## Dream Makeover



Shaun Kent is a young boy with the weight of the world on his shoulders. With his father on peacekeeping duties in the Solomon Islands and his mother recovering from back surgery he has taken on the role of the man of the house. Shaun entered the Kellogg's Dream Makeover competition with hopes of surprising his parents with a new backyard. The surprise was turned around on Shaun and the garden was blitzed without his knowledge.

Backyard Blitz presenter and landscape designer Jamie Durie has created a makeover on a grand scale for this Canberra garden. With twice the room to improve and twice the money to spend, Jamie has gone all out to create a space the whole family can enjoy. New French doors lead from the main bedroom over sandstone flagging and into a new spa. A large pergola and wisteria walkway provide a framework for the spa and lead the eye toward plantings of cool climate trees and shrubs around the fenceline. Unique gabion walls provide a windbreak and privacy screen to the spa area and stamp the Backyard Blitz touch on this beautiful garden.

### 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 approval: Check with your local council regarding regulations about safety requirements for spas and swimming pools. Alternatively contact the Swimming Pool and Spa Association (SPASA) in your state for details on fencing requirements.

### Materials

In a Backyard Blitz first, some initial site clearing and preparation was carried out with a bobcat before the team arrived. Unwanted vegetation was stripped and some earthworks were undertaken to give the team a fighting chance against the clock in this huge garden makeover.

**French doors:** an existing aluminium window was removed from the main bedroom to make way for a set of French doors that would lead into the garden. The house is of a brick veneer construction allowing the external brick wall to be cut out and the internal plaster board walls to be removed leaving a void to take the new doors. Scott fixed the door frame in place using timber packing to ensure it was square and plumb and fitted a strip of bitumenised flashing beneath the frame to stop water entering the house. Exterior storm mouldings tied the framework in with the brickwork and prevents moisture entering around the frame. New architraves, skirting boards, plasterboard and painting completed the doors internally. **Blitz Tipz** Structural building work is best undertaken by a licenced builder although this project could be tackled by a competent handyperson. Make the task run as smoothly as possible by ordering pre-hung, furnished doors from a door manufacturer. The French doors for this makeover cost about \$1400 with all inclusions.



**Sandstone paving:** sawn, split-face sandstone flagging (500x300x35mm) laid over the existing concrete slab and compacted roadbase and paving sand has created a formal entertaining area. Kiln dried Uni sand has been swept through the gaps to help bond the paving together. A mortar haunch around the perimeter of the paving holds it all in place. **Blitz Tipz** As sawn sandstone flagging is a natural product there are some variations in thickness, texture and colour which add to the complexity of laying. Discuss your project with a sandstone supplier to ensure you purchase the best stone for the job.

**Pergola:** a roofless pergola on a grand scale provides a framework and links the garden to the house. Treated pine posts (H4, 90x90mm) installed inground in rapid setting concrete support pine beams (230x45mm). All beams are nailed off and bolted using galvanised cup head bolts. A wisteria walkway runs parallel to the main pergola and will support a roof of climbing wisteria as it matures. The walkway is constructed using treated pine posts (H4, 90x90mm), beams and rafters (170x45mm). **Blitz Tipz** Long distances between posts require large and heavy timbers to span them. Attach a temporary support to all posts at the required height to support your beams whilst you nail them off and drill holes for bolts.

**Spa:** a moulded gas heated spa (Narellan Selina model) was installed inground and surrounded with a self-closing pool safety fence. The installation required plumbing, gas fitting and electrical work and was therefore undertaken by licenced trades people. **Blitz Tipz** Installation of large items such as spas should only be attempted by licenced tradespeople. However, it is easy to save money by assisting with the manual tasks such as digging and backfilling of trenches, spreading of roadbase and sand or labouring directly for the contractor.



**Garden beds:** the site soil was improved by ripping to a depth of 400mm using the bobcat. Gypsum was mixed through the soil at a rate of 2kg per square metre, and an organic soil mix was incorporated to a depth of 300mm. The garden beds were mounded to improve drainage and enhance their shape. A 75mm

layer of eucalyptus mulch was spread over the garden beds to retain soil moisture and to suppress weed growth. The red colour of this mulch provides a backdrop to the flowering trees and shrubs. **Blitz Tipz** When selecting a mulch, consider and discuss the following features with the supplier; texture, colour, particle size, source, smell, soil binding potential, rate of breakdown and cost per cubic metre.

**Sandstone wall:** a stylish low retaining wall was built using hydrasplit sandstone blocks (500x200x200mm). Brick footings (extruded commons) provided a solid base for the first course of sandstone. Drainage was installed behind the wall in the form of a covered agricultural pipe surrounded in blue metal (20mm) and in front of the wall as a rubble drain of river pebbles (20mm). Blocks were laid level with a 10mm mortar joint of 4 parts brickies sand to one part off-white cement. All excess mortar was removed and the sandstone cleaned using clean water and a sponge. Half of the wall was capped using sandstone pavers (500x300x35mm) laid over a bed of mortar to create a bench seat 450mm high. **Blitz Tipz** To create a curved block wall widen the vertical joints at the back of the wall while maintaining the joint width at the front of the wall. Doing this will create a gentle curve in the wall.



**Sleeper paving:** treated pine sleepers (H4, 2400x200x100mm) have been laid over compacted roadbase and paving sand to form a timber paved area around the spa. Each sleeper is skew nailed to an adjacent sleeper and kiln dried Uni sand swept through the top helps to bond the sleepers together. **Blitz Tipz** Although treated pine sleepers are all milled to the same size, ensure a precise finish by squaring off each end and reducing them all to exactly the same length before laying as paving.



**Gabions:** pre-fabricated, galvanised steel cages were installed inground in concrete. Painted with black Bristol Weathertough low sheen acrylic the gabions tie in well with the spa fencing. Large diameter round river pebbles (100-150mm) were hand stacked to resemble a random rubble dry stack wall. The gabion was located more than 900mm away from the pool fence for safety reasons. **Blitz Tipz** When stacking stones to create a dry stacked wall ensure that the layers are bound together by larger stones running perpendicular to the length of the wall. These 'through stones' help to bond the wall together and prevent it from toppling.

## Plants

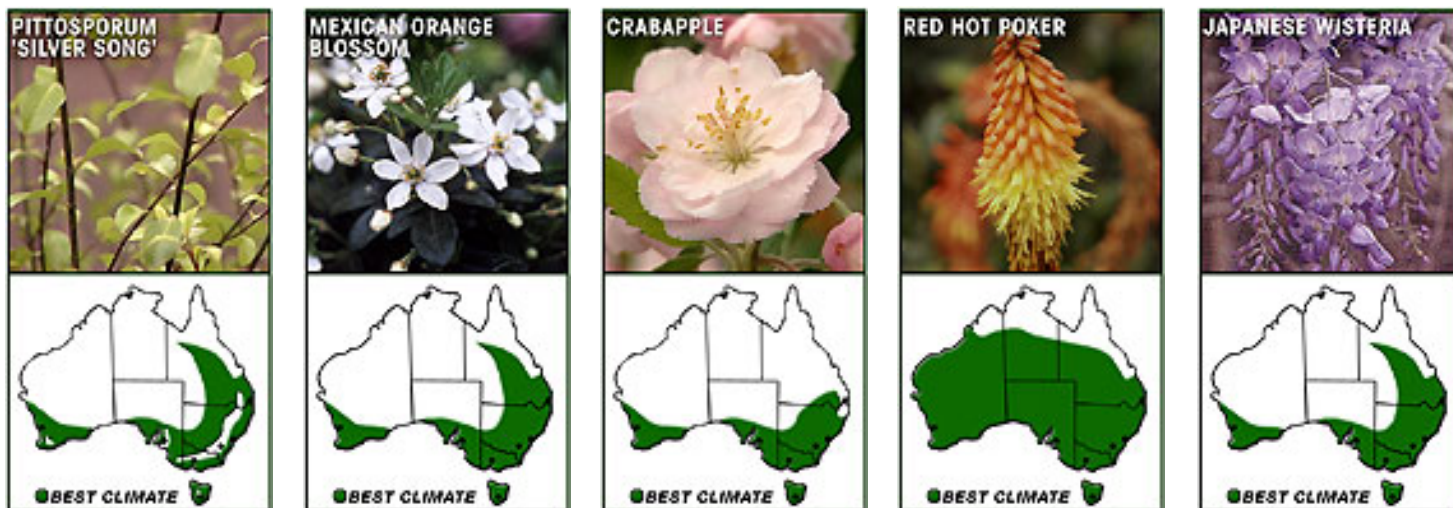
**Trees:** Bechtel's crab (*Malus ioensis* 'Plena'), cherry plum (*Prunus cerasifera* 'Nigra'), crabapple (*Malus floribunda*), michelia (*Michelia yunnanensis*), pittosporum (*Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Silver Song')

**Shrubs and perennials:** Mexican orange blossom (*Choisya ternata*), broom (*Cytisus x dallimorei* 'Lilac Time'), pink escallonia (*Escallonia laevis*), hebe (*Hebe* 'Inspiration'), sweet viburnum (*Viburnum odoratissimum*), weigela (*Weigela florida* 'Eva Rathke'), New Zealand flax (*Phormium tenax*)

**Groundcovers:** bearded Iris (*Iris* Hybrids), giant mondo (*Liriope muscari* 'Evergreen Giant'), red hot poker (*Kniphofia* Hybrids)

**Climbers:** Japanese wisteria (*Wisteria floribunda*, *W. floribunda* 'Macrobotrys' & *W. floribunda* 'Shiro Noda')

**Lawn:** Alturf (Canberra Blend)



## 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 \$37,040. This cost could be reduced to \$28,355 by using smaller plants.

## Product details

- The inground gas heated spa was supplied and fitted by Action Pools and Spas in Canberra. Phone: (02) 6288 5077 for specific details.
- Sawn sandstone flagging and hydrasplit blocks were sourced from Silex Quarries near Canberra. Phone: (02) 6230 9266 for prices and availability on their range of stone products.
- Galvanised gabions cost about \$900 each and were manufactured in Sydney by St George Metals. Phone: (02) 9556 1970 for further information.
- French doors were supplied by Country Style Windows in Canberra. The frame and doors for this job cost about \$1400. Phone: (02) 6299 2557 for further details. Scott used some Pak Wedges. These long-lasting packing wedges are available from SE Discount Timber Yard, NSW, phone: (02) 9699 3388 and Midcoast Timber, NSW, phone: (02) 9809 0731. Cost \$10.50 packet of 20 or boxes of various sizes \$31.50. For more information phone: (02) 6332 1939 or fax orders to (02) 6332 5819. For all other states please email: pakwedge@ix.net.au
- Turf was a blend of three grasses commonly used in Canberra as Canberra Blend, called Alturf. Comprising 70% fine fescue, 25% Kentucky bluegrass and 5% strawberry clover it cost \$4.80 per square metre from Canturf. Phone: (02) 6238 1200 for availability.
- 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:

Shoalhaven River Retreat

'Oallen'

Lot 13 Oallen Rd

Nerriga via Braidwood NSW 2622

Phone: (02) 4844 5344

website: [www.users.bigpond.com/shoalhaven](http://www.users.bigpond.com/shoalhaven)

## Acknowledgments

Design by Jamie Durie of Patio at:

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