

BACKYARD BLITZ

On the Level



Michelle Singh is a miraculous mother to three beautiful children. While pregnant with her third child, Michelle lost her husband James to a heart attack when he was just 31 years old. Michelle's sister, Gabrielle, wrote to the Backyard Blitz team to describe her sister's resilience and ongoing joy for life, in the hope that something special could be given back to Michelle. The team was only too happy to get in and help give the backyard a facelift.

Design intent

Landscape designer, Matthew Cantwell from Secret Gardens of Sydney, aimed to create a garden room that flows directly from the rear of the house, enabling Michelle to watch her children play safely from the back of the house. Excavation and decking have created a single level play and entertainment area right at the back door.



Design ideas

This garden design lends itself to future renovations on the house as well. Opening up the rear of the house will encourage indoor/outdoor living that is so popular in Australia. A good garden design should consider future developments to the house and garden and be able to evolve as changes are made. Like any project, planning ahead will achieve the best results.

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 required amounts of materials.

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 structures in the backyard. Always talk to your neighbours and the council before commencing your project as it could save you thousands of dollars and will help to make the project run smoothly.

Getting started

A bobcat was used to clear unwanted vegetation from the site. A large excavation was undertaken to create levels for the deck, paving and garden beds and excess soil was removed with an excavator and bobcat.

Garden elements



Cross hatched deck: Scott created a funky cross hatched deck to replicate the paving pattern and Jamie's privacy screens. The entire deck was constructed using treated pine posts, bearers, joists and decking boards. Treated pine posts (H4, 90x90mm) installed vertically in-ground in quick setting concrete support bearers (H3, 190x45mm) nailed and bolted in place with cup-head galvanised bolts (10x150mm). Joists (H3, 90x45mm) skew nailed perpendicular to the top of the bearers support decking boards laid in the cross hatched pattern. **Blitz Tipz:** All timber decks shrink and swell during changes in weather, so allow for this by leaving a few millimetres between decking boards and the house.



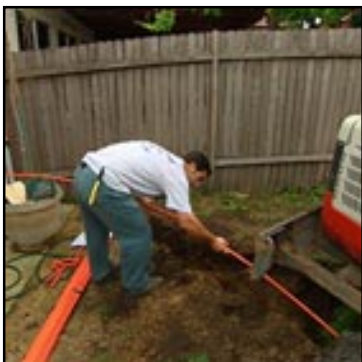
Lattice screens: Jamie constructed three chunky lattice screens to provide a contrast to the coloured walls behind and to create some privacy. Treated pine posts (H4, 90x90mm) installed vertically in ground support 190x45mm rails and verticals in a lattice pattern. The horizontal members were nailed to the posts first to enable the vertical members to hide the joins between rails. **Blitz Tipz:** Pre-painting the timbers in any structure like this saves time and ensures a better finish.



Paving: Nigel laid bluestone coloured pavers to match the stepped edge of the deck. A compacted sub-grade of roadbase 100mm thick supports the coarse washed bedding sand spread 30mm thick. Pavers laid in a grid pattern were bedded in using a vibrating plate compactor and grout sand was swept through the gaps. A concrete haunch around the perimeter of the job locks it all in place and prevents the bedding sand from washing out. **Blitz Tipz:** Start your paving along the longest straight edge you can, to minimise the need to cut pavers.

Lighting: Bright colours have been chosen for the fenceline and the side of the garage as part of the lighting design for this garden. Five, 240 volt floodlights were installed by a licensed electrician. The floodlights enhance the bright colour behind the new lattice screens and add another dimension to the garden once the sun sets. **Blitz Tipz:** Low voltage lights and hardware cost more than 240 volt materials, however you can reduce the cost of labour by installing them yourself.

Garden beds: Jody incorporated an organic soil mix through her new garden beds to ensure quick plant establishment. A mulch of leaf litter spread to a depth of 75mm thick will help to maintain soil temperature and reduce weed regrowth. **Blitz Tipz:** Jody guided the bobcat to incorporate the organic mix with the excellent site soil.



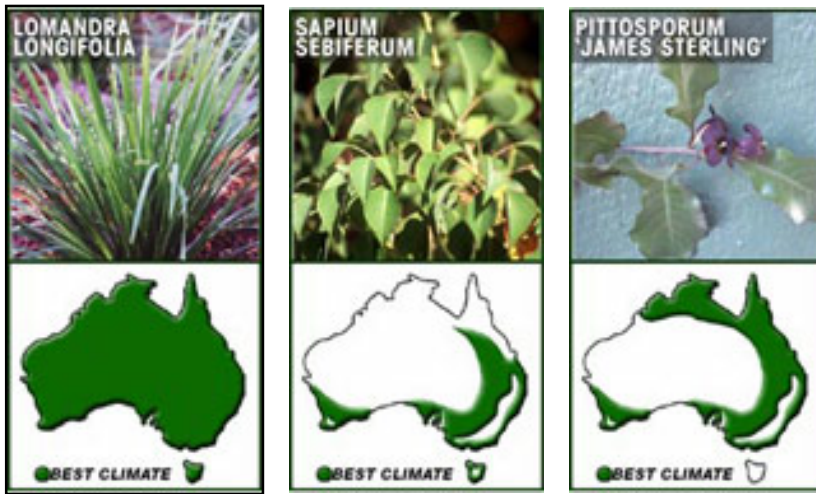
Plants

A simple palette of medium trees and soft clumping groundcovers will keep this garden easy on the eye and easy to maintain.

Trees: Chinese tallow (*Sapium sebiferum*), lilly pilly (*Syzygium 'Orange Twist'*), pittosporum (*Pittosporum tenuifolium 'James Stirling'*)

Shrubs: gardenia (*Gardenia augusta 'Florida'*)

Groundcovers: lomandra (*Lomandra longifolia*), 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 \$13,107. The use of smaller plants would have reduced the cost to \$10,060.

Product details

- Boral pavers cost about \$20 per square metre. We used a concrete paver called Terracestone, Bluestone.
- Milan square pots were sourced from Motyaj Potteries in Sydney. Phone (02) 9618 6866 for details on prices.
- 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 concrete mixer and the nail gun.



Getaway details

Rafferty's Resort
1 Wild Duck Drive via Rafferty's Road
Cams Wharf
Lake Macquarie
Phone: (02) 4972 5555
Web: www.raffertysresort.com.au

Australian Reptile Park
Pacific Hwy



Somersby, Gosford
Phone: (02) 4340 1022
Web: www.reptilepark.com.au

Acknowledgments

Design by:

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Secret Gardens of Sydney
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Construction by the Backyard Blitz team (all gardens are gifts from Backyard Blitz).



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