

BACKYARD BLITZ

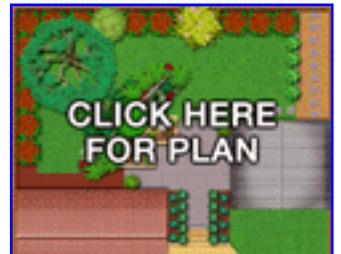
Family Form



Karen Kennedy and her young family have had a tough time over the last few years. Ten days before Christmas, 1999, burglars broke into their home and stole presents from under the tree. The thieves actually unwrapped the children's gifts and those of greatest value were stolen. The family moved out immediately and purchased a home in need of some attention. Karen has been renovating the house for the last 18 months and only moved in about three months ago. Renovating is a stressful business at the best of times, but doing it on a shoestring as a single mother of three children is even more difficult.

Karen's parents, Barbara and Brian, felt that Karen deserved a break. A letter to the Backyard Blitz team outlining her recent difficulties and some photos of the backyard were enough to convince the team to pitch in and lend a hand.

Landscape designer, Greg Bell, from Rare Earth Landscape Design has created an urban jungle in this small suburban backyard. A paved entertaining area links the house with the new garden and leads toward a shallow, child friendly water feature. Colourful perimeter plantings and a central bed of palms and ferns will create a private fantasy garden for the three young children in this home.



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. Before you start work, discuss your proposal with the council and with your neighbours. It will make the building process easier and may even save you money.

Getting started

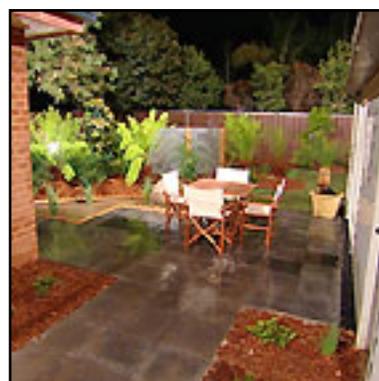
A bobcat was used to remove unwanted vegetation and to create subgrade levels for Jamie's water feature and Nigel's paving. To create access for the bobcat through the garage, a window and wall lining was removed. Scott replaced the window with a sliding door once the bobcat was finished. Heavy materials were carted into the backyard following the initial setout.

Materials

Water feature: Jamie built a stylish water feature with a heavy duty pond liner and a hardwood timber surround. Paving inlaid with timber has been cleverly designed to flow into the pond, creating a walkway for the children. A shallow excavation lined with coarse washed river sand provides a smooth, firm base to the large pond liner (6x3m, 1.2mm thick). Treated pine sleepers (2400x200x100mm) laid on edge and nailed together create the sides to the pond. The liner, draped into the pond and held in place with a capping of hardwood above the water line, provides a simple, formal water feature. A low-voltage, submersible pump housed in a plastic sump pushes water through a non-kink pipe and through a decorative fibreglass sphere. **Blitz Tipz** Jamie lined the pond with a 200mm layer of gravel to reduce the water depth and make the water feature safe for children.



Paving: Nigel created a pathway and entertaining area to link the house to the garden. A decorative inlay of treated pine sleepers connects the paving with the adjacent water feature. By setting the finished levels of paving prior to starting, Nigel and Jamie could lay each sleeper into the ground at the finished height. The sleepers were then backfilled with roadbase to build up subgrade levels to support the paving. Large concrete pavers (Stonepave, 455x455x40mm) were laid in a stretcher bond pattern over a compacted subgrade of roadbase and coarse washed river sand. Grouting sand swept through the pavers helps to bind them in place, while a 4:1 mortar haunch prevents bedding sand from washing away.



Blitz Tipz It is recommended that garden paths be at least 1200mm wide. This allows two people to comfortably walk side by side.

Steel screens: galvanised, perforated steel sheets combined with hardwood posts provide interest and partial screening in the backyard. The sheets (2300x1150mm) were laid longitudinally, enabling the children to hide from each other but to still be seen by their mother. Posts installed vertically in rapid setting concrete sandwich the steel and tek screws hold each sheet in place. **Blitz Tipz** Perforated steel sheets are available with a range of hole sizes and shapes.



Sliding door: Scott installed an aluminium sliding door in the side of the garage. This was a simple way to repair the access hole created for the bobcat and enables the garage to be used as a play area for the children. The garage is of a lightweight timber frame construction allowing the external cladding to be cut out and the internal studs to be removed, leaving a void to take the new door. Scott fixed the door frame in place using timber packing to ensure it was square and plumb, and a strip of bitumenised flashing beneath the frame to stop water entering the garage. Exterior angles tie the door frame in with the metal cladding and prevent moisture entering around the frame. An additional timber lintel was run between the new door and the old top plate to provide additional strength beneath the roof trusses. **Blitz Tipz** Structural building work is best undertaken by a licensed builder, although this project could be tackled by a competent handy person. Make the task run as smoothly as possible by ordering a door frame to fit between existing stud spacings from a door manufacturer. The sliding doors for this makeover cost about \$1250.

Garden beds: the compacted site soil was improved by incorporating an organic garden mix to a depth of 200mm. Plastic garden edging connected to hardwood stakes helps define the garden bed shapes and prevents grass from growing into the garden. An organic mulch of forest fines spread to a depth of 75mm helps to reduce weed growth and retains moisture in the soil. **Blitz Tipz** When spreading mulch around new plants, ensure the mulch is not piled up against the stems.



Tree removal: a declining *Eucalyptus nicholii* was removed by an arborist. Council permission was sought prior to starting the makeover and was granted by the local council. **Blitz Tipz** When applying

to your council to remove a large tree, have a replacement planting scheme in mind and affix it to your application. You are more likely to receive a favourable response if you already have replacements in mind.

Pots: Jody planted some striking grass trees into two reconstituted sandstone pots on the new paving. They help to soften the bare walls of the house and garage and break up the expanse of paving. Native potting mix was used in the pre-sealed, pre-drilled pots. **Blitz Tipz** Native potting mixes contain a high proportion of sand as well as low-phosphorus fertiliser suitable for natives.

Plants

Trees and shrubs: eumundi quandong (*Elaeocarpus eumundi*), golden penda (*Xanthostemon chrysanthus*), photinia (*Photinia x fraseri* 'Robusta')

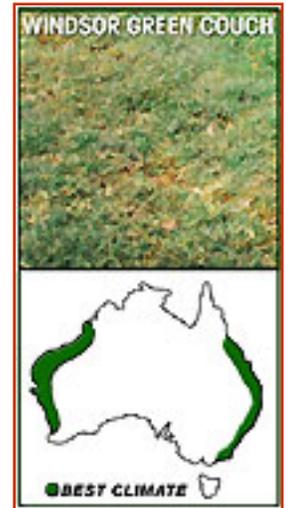
Palms, ferns and cycads: bamboo palm (*Chamaedorea seifrizii*), soft tree fern (*Dicksonia antarctica*), cycad (*Cycas revoluta*)

Climbers: star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*)

Perennials: grass tree (*Xanthorrhoea australis*)

Ground covers and clumping plants: gardenia (*Gardenia augusta* 'Radicans'), blue tussock grass (*Poa labillardieri* 'Eskdale'), miscanthus (*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Zebrinus'), carex (*Carex* 'Frosted Curls'), blue sedge (*Carex riparia*)

Turf: 'Windsor Green' couch



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 \$12,939. This cost could be reduced to \$9,876 by using smaller plants.

Product details

- Gunmetal pavers are available from Stonemasonry for about \$70 per square metre. Phone (02) 4353 0039 for more product details.
- Perforated steel is available in a range of patterns. It can be guillotined to size. Look under

'steel merchants' in your local *Yellow Pages* for suppliers in your area.

- All components for the water feature are available from Contour Ponds in Sydney. Phone: (02) 9369 1511 for prices and details of their other products.
- Most of the plants we used are readily available at nurseries or can be ordered in for you (you may need to contact specialist nurseries for some plants). Your local nursery can also recommend similar varieties suitable for your particular climate and situation.
- Most other materials are available from large hardware stores, building or landscape suppliers.
- All tools used are commonly available for hire including the bobcat and the nail gun.

Getaway details

Accommodation:

Novotel Northbeach
2-14 Cliff Rd
Nth Wollongong
Phone: (02) 4226 3555
Web: www.novotelnorthbeach.com

Restaurant:

Lonestar Steakhouse & Saloon
Cnr Flinders & Achilles St
Nth Wollongong
Phone: (02) 4226 3700
Web: www.lonestarsteakhouse.com

Activities:

Jamberoo Recreation Park
Jamberoo Road
Jamberoo
Phone: (02) 4236 0114
Web: www.jamberoo.net

Acknowledgments

Design by Rare Earth Landscape Design.
Phone: 0404 043 788
Email: rareearthlandscape@hotmail.com

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

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



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