

# BACKYARD BLITZ

## Kids Central



Scott Head and his wife Cathy already had their hands pretty full with 11 kids, but when Cathy died suddenly last year, Scott's situation became close to unmanageable. The children range in age from two to 15 years, and losing their mother has been a painful ordeal... who could be more deserving of the ultimate kids garden than this family? We transform this Queensland backyard into the ultimate kids wonderland – complete with an underground bunker!

What would you do with 11 kids and one enormous expanse of grass? Standby as Jamie and the team go all out in building the ultimate kids' zone. Dozens of great design ideas, guaranteed hours of entertainment solutions for anyone with children.



KIDS PLAYGROUND

FRONT MAKEOVER

## Design intent

Landscape designer Andrew Davies from dig design created a kid's wonderland. A huge bike track snakes throughout the garden. There is a sandpit, a beautiful big castle for the girls and a full-size bunker sunk into the garden with a periscope, walkie talkies and a surveillance camera.

## Design ideas

Jamie looked at the front garden, considering the existing plants as assets and adding new plants to create a full and established feel to the garden. Whenever buying plants, Jamie buys a comprehensive range of plants, considering ground covers as the horizontal element, accent plants, and filling plants as well as a backdrop of palms.

## 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 earthworks and drainage. If you are changing existing levels or installing drainage ensure no water run-off is directed toward neighbouring properties. Any water entering the storm water system must be free from debris and sediment.

## Getting started

Grass and weeds were removed and the area regraded.

**Blitz Tipz:** Asparagus fern is a serious environmental weed in Australia and should always be removed and destroyed.

## Garden elements

**Paths:** After setting out the pathway with survey paint, Nigel laid out the plastic edging, fixed into ground with timber survey pegs. This edging defines the path and keeps the crusher dust from falling into the garden. The crusher dust was laid 50-70 mm deep and then raked cement into the crusher dust, screeding the path level before plate compacting.

**Blitz Tipz:** Crusher dust is an economical and good material for pathways and driveways because it compacts to a hard and stable surface. Crusher dust is also known as blue metal dust, cracker dust, quarry sand, and 5mm minus (in Victoria).

**Bunker:** The bunker was made out of a 1680mm wide x 1500mm high concrete tank with a doorway cut into it (500mm wide x 1m deep from the top edge). A hole 2 metres wide and 1 metre deep was dug out and steps carefully dug out to the doorway. The tank was then lowered into the hole.

**Blitz Tipz:** Make sure there is drainage for groundwater to avoid tank filling with water or floating out of ground.



Four main posts (H4, 200 x 100mm sleepers x 2m high) were put into position around the tank. A top plate of sleepers was then bolted around the four upright posts. At this point, we backfilled around the tank to 1m high, leaving the tank 500mm out of ground.

Then rafters (200mm x 70mm sleepers at 350mm centres) were installed. This was the support for the roof which was built of 200 x 75mm sleepers on the flat, placed on top of the rafters. These were screwed in with 120mm galvanized screws to hold in place.

A fascia of (200x70mm sleeper) was then used to trim the rafters.

We then cut a hole for the periscope, which was held in place with a 500mm diameter stainless steel plate, bolted to the roof.

To stop water getting into the tank and to provide an impervious surface for watering plants on the roof, a butyl liner was then put in place by cutting a hole for the periscope, and then neatly cut around the edges of the roof. Using a silicone roof sealer, the periscope hole and edges of the liner were sealed to the timber structure.

For the entry into the bunker, we retained around each side of the steps into the bunker, using 200mm x 70mm sleepers. The steps were also constructed out of 200mm x 70mm sleepers.

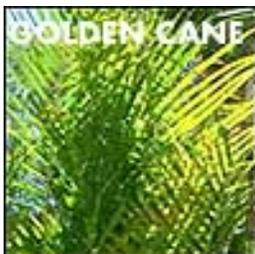
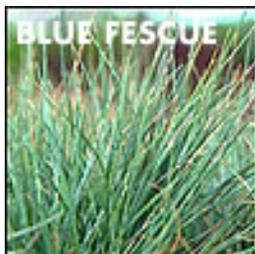
**Blitz Tipz:** Always use galvanized nails and bolts to avoid rusting from chemical reaction with treated timber.

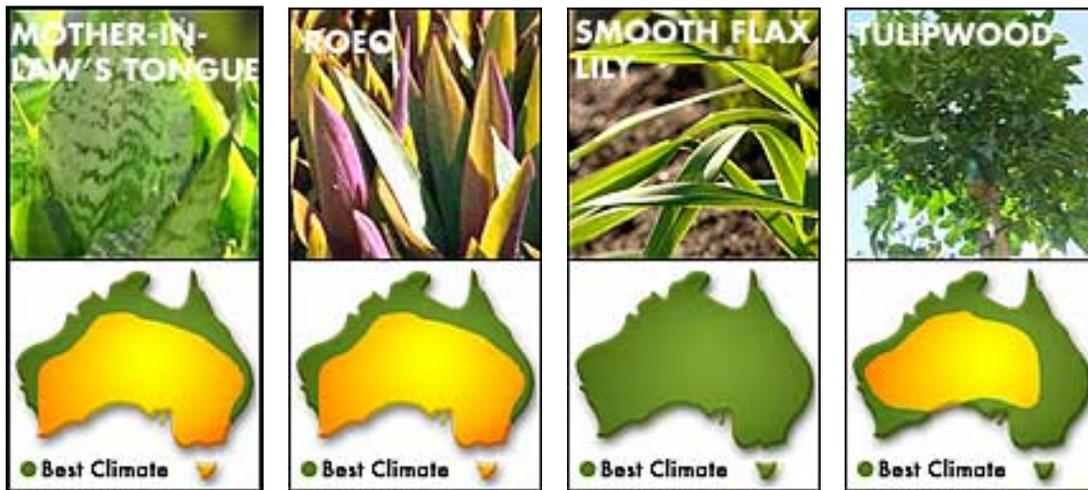
We then again backfilled the remaining 500mm of the tank still sitting out of the ground to form a mound which was planted out, completing our camouflage.

**Sandpit:** We bought a concrete cattle trough, 3m in diameter and 500mm tall and we dug a hole 200mm deep and placed the trough into the hole, leaving it 300mm exposed. Then we mounded soil up to the rim of the sandpit and grassed one half of it and the other half was planted out. The sandpit was then filled with sand.

**Blitz Tipz:** For the ultimate sand castle mix, try combining one-third brickies sand and two-thirds washed fine sand.

**The Castle:** The castle is a concrete water tank 1680mm wide x 2m high. The ground was graded level using crusher dust and compacted. The tank was lifted into place. We marked out a doorway 1500mm x 500 mm wide and three windows, 400mm wide x 900 high. These were cut out with a demolition saw. We then painted the inside of the castle white, the ceiling gold, and the outside a straw colour. We painted in the blockwork using darker paint. Fairy lights were fixed to the ceiling inside. Soft fall in the castle and bunker was made from rubber matting clipped together. The driveway was regraded with road base.





## Plants

**Palms:** carpentaria palm (*Carpentaria acuminata*), golden cane palm (*Dyopsis lutescens*)

**Trees:** tulipwood (*Harpullia pendula*)

**Shrubs:** Fijian fire plant (*Acalypha 'Spitfire'*), midgen berry (*Austromyrtus dulcis*), Fiji Christmas bush (*Metrosideros 'Fiji Fire'*), jungle flame (*Ixora chinensis 'Prince of Orange'* and *'Pink Malay'*), croton (*Codiaeum variegatum*), gardenia (*Gardenia augusta 'Florida'*), cordyline (*Cordyline 'Rubra'*), buddha's belly bamboo (*Bambusa ventricosa*), philodendron (*Philodendron 'Xanadu'*) sacred bamboo (*Nandina domestica 'Nana'*)

**Perennial:** smooth flax lily (*Dianella longifolia*), brachyscome (*Brachyscome multifida*), lomandra (*Lomandra 'Tanika'*), knobby club-rush (*Isolepis nodosa*), Korean grass (*Zoysia tenuifolia*), rhoecyrtis (*Tradescantia spathacea*), clivia (*Clivia miniata*), spider lily (*Hymenocallis littoralis*), evolvulus (*Evolvulus pilosus*), blue fescue (*Festuca glauca*), dietes (*Dietes bicolor*), mother-in-law's tongue (*Sansevieria trifasciata*)

**Climber:** kangaroo vine (*Cissus 'Ellen Danica'*)

## Product details

- 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 mini loader and the nail gun.
- Our concrete tanks and trough came from Betacrete, phone (07) 4928 3422.
- The monitor and camera kit came from Swann Communications, phone 1300 138 324.
- The periscope came from Toole's Disposals, phone (02) 6024 1300.
- The 2-pack UHF Uniden Walkie-talkie is available at Harvey Norman stores.

## Cost

We used mature plants in this makeover to create an instant effect for television. As a result, our total cost for plants and materials was \$22,043. The use of smaller plants would have reduced the cost to \$17,955.

## Holiday Details

Waters Edge Luxury Apartments

4 Golden Orchid Drive

Airlie Beach

Phone: (07) 4948 2655

Web: [www.watersedge.whitsunday.net.au](http://www.watersedge.whitsunday.net.au)

Proserpine Bait & Tackle

Fishing Charters

Phone: (07) 4945 4641

Maxi Ragamuffin

Whitsunday Island Adventures

Toll Free: 1800 454 777

Web: [www.maxiaction.com.au](http://www.maxiaction.com.au)

Aviation Tourism Australia

Helireef Chopper Tours

Phone: (07) 4946 8249

Web: [www.avta.com.au](http://www.avta.com.au)

## Kids' holiday details

## Accommodation

Mariner on the Pacific and Alexandra on the Pacific (next door to each

other)

4 Buderim Ave, Alexander Head

Mooloolaba

Web: [www.alexandraonthepacific.com](http://www.alexandraonthepacific.com)

## **Tourist Activities**

Buderim Ginger Factory

55 Pioneer Rd, Yandina

Web: [www.buderimginger.com](http://www.buderimginger.com)

Australian Zoo

Glass House Mountains Tourist Drive

Beerwah, Sunshine Coast

Web: [www.australiazoo.com.au](http://www.australiazoo.com.au)

## **Acknowledgements**

Design by dig design

Andrew Davies

Dig design ideas gardens

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For more Step by Step Constructions click here

