

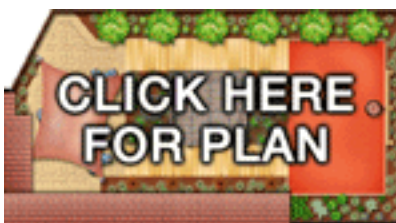
# BACKYARD BLITZ

## Respite and Recreation



The Castle Hill Respite House is run by the Spastic Centre of NSW and is the only respite unit for disabled children in the state. The centre offers a recreational and relaxation space for physically disadvantaged children as well as respite for their parents and carers. Originally a residential property, The Castle Hill Respite House was bought 15 years ago and has since been modified to accommodate the needs of special children.

Mavis Livdans has worked at the centre for 12 years as well as caring for her brother and her daughter who also have disabilities. Mavis is an inspiration to all who visit the centre, so the Backyard Blitz team was happy to help upgrade the facilities and say thank you on behalf of the centre staff and its visitors.



Matthew Cantwell, a landscape designer from Secret Gardens of Sydney, has created a garden that provides stimulation for all the senses. A variety of paved surfaces, water features, shaded and open areas, recreational facilities and chill out zones will enhance the children's enjoyment of their physical environment. The creation of garden rooms will enable multiple activities to occur at the same time.

## 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 water features. If your water feature is deeper than a certain depth, you may be required to erect a pool fence around it. The depths vary between council areas across Australia.

## Getting started

A disused, in-ground pool surrounded by concrete pathways welcomed the Blitz team totally dominating the site. The pool was drained the day before the makeover and the team proceeded to fill the empty shell with imported clean fill, which was compacted in layers. The team could then start work on the set out.

## Materials



**Pergola:** Scott built a simple pergola in the centre of the garden, dividing the space into rooms and providing a frame for swinging sensory toys. Treated pine posts (H4, 90x90mm) were installed in the ground vertically in rapid setting concrete. Beams (H3, 140x45mm) were bolted horizontally between the posts with galvanized cup-head bolts. The beams support rafters (H3, 90x45mm), which were skew nailed in place. A lightweight, polycarbonate roof will help reduce UV rays reaching people sitting beneath the structure. **Blitz Tipz** Cut a notch (house-out) into the end of the rafter sitting on top of the beam to create a slight fall on the roof.



**Sleeper paving:** the three 'rooms' of the garden are defined and linked by different paving materials. The central room links both ends of the garden and is paved with treated pine sleepers laid flat. A compacted roadbase subgrade creates the required slope, while coarse washed river sand provides a level bed to accommodate the sleeper halves (2400x200x100mm). Each sleeper was skew nailed to the next sleeper in the path using a nail gun. Fine-grained grouting sand was swept through the gaps between the sleepers, helping to bind them together. **Blitz Tipz** Treated pine sleepers may shrink or swell when they are first installed in the ground. Nail a length of perforated hoop iron around the perimeter of the sleepers to lock them together and to minimise this movement.

**Brick paving:** Nigel laid brick pavers (Havenbrick, Sunstone) in a 90 degree herringbone pattern leading from the house out into the garden. An existing concrete slab was removed to allow subgrade levels to finish just below the existing floor levels. Roadbase spread to a depth of 100mm and compacted provides a solid base. Coarse washed river sand was screeded to achieve falls away from the house. A fine grained grouting sand was swept between the gaps of the laid pavers, helping to bind them together, while a rapid setting sand/cement haunch locks the whole job in place. **Blitz Tipz** Run a plate compactor over the laid pavers once grouting sand has been roughly swept through the gaps. Connect a square of carpet to the base of the compactor to protect the pavers during compaction.



**Concrete slab:** concrete is a cheap and hard-wearing paving surface that requires good preparation for best results. Scott and Nigel levelled the base beneath the slab to ensure a maximum concrete thickness of 100mm. Hardwood pegs and nails secured formwork laid around the perimeter of the proposed slab. Reinforcing mesh (F72) supported on plastic bar chairs adds strength to the concrete. A construction joint (a groove marked through the surface of the concrete as it cures) was installed to control and limit any cracking. An oxide was pre-mixed into the concrete to create the earthy colour - this colour is called 'Uluru'. **Blitz Tipz** Preparation is the key when it comes to laying concrete. Most concrete companies allow 30 minutes to pour concrete from the truck. Any time above this costs about \$1 per minute for the truck to remain on-site.

**Ponds:** Jamie installed two fun water features to provide the sound of running water and to add visual interest to the space. Matching prefabricated circular ponds (920x280mm) were sunk into the garden beds. Two low-voltage, submersible pumps (one for each pond) force water through flexible copper pipe (19mm). A series of small drill holes (2mm) on the underside of the coiled pipe allow water to trickle in many directions. **Blitz Tipz** Ensure that all water travelling through the pump falls back into the pond or you will waste water and the pump may run dry.



**Basketball hoop:** a prefabricated basketball hoop, backboard and post were purchased from a retail sports store. Scott installed the post into rapid setting concrete in a 800mmx300mm hole. The backboard was bolted into place and the concrete was left to set. **Blitz Tipz** Check the manufacturers directions on the back of the concrete bag to determine how long it takes to set.

**Shadesail:** A shadesail connected to a galvanised steel pole (100mm diameter, 3.5mm thick) and the existing brick wall of the house provides a weatherproof outdoor seating and recreational area. Stainless steel chain, shackles and turnbuckles create tension to the shadesail once connected to the built-in corner attachment points. This sail, post and attachment equipment cost about \$1900 to purchase and install yourself. **Blitz Tipz** Individual timber posts are not recommended as shadesail connection points as they tend to flex and occasionally break under strain.

**Funky outdoor tables:** concrete form ply has been used to create some funky and functional table tops, painted and coated with polyurethane by Jody. Painted concrete stormwater pipe from James Hardie provides a solid base to the tabletops. Curved cut-outs along the edge of the tabletop allow wheelchairs to roll in beneath the edge of the table. **Blitz Tipz** Ensure that base supports are wide enough to resist overturning if weight is placed on the tabletop. We used 500mm diameter pipe and screwed some angle brackets into the base.





**Timber screen:** Scott created a simple and stylish timber screen beneath the basketball hoop. Three treated pine posts (H4, 90x90mm) were installed vertically in-ground to provide a framework against which treated pine decking boards (90x20mm) were nailed. **Blitz Tipz** If you have to connect two boards together for your screen, cut a mitre joint (45 degree) for a professional finish.

**Garden beds:** the majority of the garden beds were covered in concrete. Jody directed the bobcat to remove unwanted concrete. An organic soil mix was mixed through the existing site soil to improve water holding capacity and increase nutrient levels. Replica wine barrels were filled with potting mix and planted out with citrus. Horticultural grade pine bark spread to a depth of 75mm will help reduce moisture loss from the soil and minimise weed growth. **Blitz Tipz** Mix composted organic soil around your plants as you backfill after planting.

## Plants

**Trees:** calamondin (*Citrus mitis*)

**Perennials:** butterfly bush (*Gaura lindheimeri* 'White Sensation'), New Zealand flax (*Phormium tenax* 'Purpureum'), Spanish iris (*Diates bicolor*)

**Ornamental grasses:** knobby club-rush (*Isolepis nodosa*)

**Succulents:** echeveria (*Echeveria* 'Blue Curl')



## Cost and availability

We used some mature plants in our makeover to create an instant effect for television. As a result, our total cost for plants and materials was \$10,533. This cost could be reduced to \$9,777 by using smaller plants.

## Product details

- Small unit pavers from C&M Bricks cost from \$25 per square metre (depending on your location). We used Sunstone coloured Havenbricks (200x100x40mm).
- Polycarbonate roof sheeting (760x3000mm) is available at good hardware outlets and costs about \$20 per sheet.
- Prefabricated black fibreglass ponds (930x280mm) cost \$140 from Contour Ponds in Sydney; phone: (02) 9369 1511. Low-voltage pumps and transformers are available at nurseries, hardware stores and some pet stores.
- Concrete costs from \$180 per cubic metre depending on your location and additional additives such as oxide or accelerants. Concrete can only be ordered in increments of 0.2m<sup>3</sup> - for example 0.6, 0.8 or 1.0m<sup>3</sup>.
- Most of the plants we used are readily available at nurseries. If not, your nursery can order them for you or give you advice about 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 and landscape suppliers.
- All tools used are commonly available for hire, including the bobcat and nail gun.

## Getaway details

The Convent Peppertree Halls Road Pokolbin, NSW Phone: (02) 4998 7764 Web: <a href="http://www.peppers.com.au">www.peppers.com.au</a>	Pokolbin Horse Coaches McDonalds Road Pokolbin, NSW Phone: (02) 4998 7305 Fax: (02)4998 7100 Web: <a href="http://www.pokolbin-horse-coaches.com.au">www.pokolbin-horse-coaches.com.au</a>	Cafe Enzo Broke Road Pokolbin, NSW Phone: (02) 4998 7233
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## Acknowledgments

Design by: Matthew Cantwell from 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](#)



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