

# BACKYARD BLITZ

## Valley Views



Marilyn Thomas has taken an incredible journey over the last two and a half years. In July 2001 her son and only child, Tom Nash, was struck down with the deadly meningococcal disease. Tom spent the following 16 months in hospital on a roller coaster of life and death. He arrived at the hospital with just minutes to spare to ensure his survival. He lost both of his legs, both of his arms at the elbows and had multiple skin grafts to 80% of his body. Marilyn was at his bedside every day, making the trip from the Blue Mountains to Sydney.

Marilyn had to sell her home in the Blue Mountains to help fund Tom's treatment. Tom wrote to Backyard Blitz to request some help in making over the garden at his mother's new home in Wollongong, as a special way of publicly saying thank you for all her help.



## Design intent

Landscape designer, Prue Keen, wanted to maintain the great view from the rear garden toward the coast and lakes of Wollongong. To achieve this she kept all planting and structures to the edges of the garden and maintained open sight lines through the middle of the garden to the views beyond.

**Design tip:** Maximise positive attributes of your garden or landscape. Try to enhance views by channelling the eye toward them. Similarly, turn negative features such as bland brick walls or a garden shed into a feature.

## 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, and 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: many garden structures such as privacy screens and decks require council approval. Always discuss your project with neighbours and the council prior to starting work. It may save you money and will help the project to run smoothly.

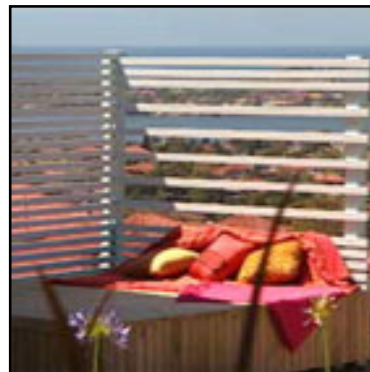
## Getting started

Before the team got to work, a turf cutter and mini-loader was used to remove turf and to excavate to sub-grade levels for Nigel's paving.

## Garden elements

**Day bed:** Scott removed a lean-to tacked to the side of the garage and created a day bed and privacy screen in its place. Adjustable galvanised stirrups were dyna-bolted to an existing concrete slab to support treated pine posts. Bearers bolted to the posts with galvanised cup-head bolts (150x10mm) support joists (90x45mm) skew-nailed in place, and decking boards nailed perpendicular to the top of the joists. Pre-primed battens nailed horizontally against the posts create a privacy screen and add a sense of intimacy to the space.

**Blitz Tipz:** Decorative elements like Jody's throw and cushions create a feeling of destination and encourage visitors to sit and reflect within the garden.



**Sleeper steps:** Scott built a simple flight of steps from the upper level leading to the water feature. Treated pine sleepers (200x75x2400mm) were nailed together as both stringers and treads to create a comfortable effective set of steps. Scott used the dimensions of the sleepers to create treads 400mm wide (two sleepers side by side) and risers 150mm high (two sleepers stacked on top of each other).

**Blitz Tipz:** Stairs in the garden should be a different size to those inside a house. Try to keep your steps all the same height, between 150-180mm and the treads the same depth, between 350-550mm.

**Steppers:** Nigel laid a curving stepping stone path using pavers laid on a bed of 4:1 sand and cement. A surrounding mulch of Nepean river gravel (20mm) provides a contrasting background and a pleasant sound underfoot.

**Blitz Tipz:** Gravel mulches are best kept separate from grassed areas or garden beds with a raised edge of brick or timber.



**Water feature:** Jamie created an elegant and formal water feature as a focal point within the garden. A rectangular footing of bricks laid in mortar supports three courses of aerated concrete blocks (Hebel, 600x200x200mm). A pre-fabricated, fibreglass pond shell (1800x900x300mm) supported within the Hebel block walls was capped with double bullnose pavers to hold the pond shell in place and to add a sense of formality to the design. The Hebel blocks were bagged with a sand and cement mix applied in circular motions with a sponge. A low voltage submersible pump bubbles just beneath the surface of the water.

**Blitz Tipz:** The location of the water feature provides a link to the glorious lake views beyond.



**Paving:** Using ivory-coloured pavers from Wilsonstone, Nigel created a raised platform and landing in the form of a semi-circular entertaining area. The grass and soil were hand excavated to accommodate the installation of 120mm of compacted roadbase, 30mm of coarse washed river sand and the thickness of the paver. Nigel "over paved" the whole area then used a length of conduit and a marking pen to trace an arc onto the pavers. A quick cut concrete saw was used to cut the pavers to shape and a header course was laid on concrete to hold the whole job together.

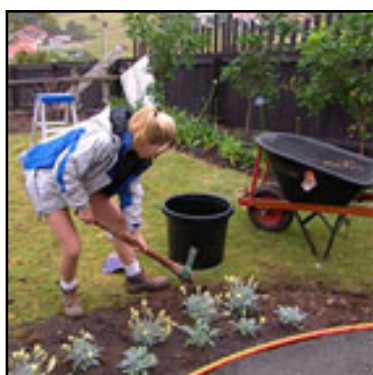
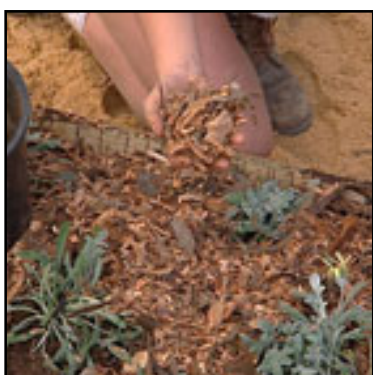
**Blitz Tipz:** Ensure your roadbase is compacted in layers if you have to build an area up more than 120mm.





**Garden beds:** Jody improved the existing site soil by incorporating organic matter through the new garden areas. A 75mm thick layer of leaf litter mulch over planted areas will help to retain soil moisture, regulate soil temperature and prevent weed regrowth.

**Blitz Tipz:** Spread mulches between 50mm and 100mm thick over all planted areas other than turf, making sure that mulch is not piled up around the stems of plants



## Plants

A mixture of hardy and colourful plants has been selected for this exposed site. Lines of sight to the view beyond have been retained and enhanced with an avenue-style planting down either side of the garden.

**Tree:** tuckeroo (*Cupaniopsis anacardiodes*)

**Perennials:** New Zealand flax (*Phormium tenax* 'Purpureum'), agapanthus (*Agapanthus praecox* ssp. *orientalis*), iris (*Iris* sp.), isolepis (*Isolepis nodosa*)

**Groundcover:** gazania (*Gazania* 'Lemon Magic')



## 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 \$11,427. The use of smaller plants would have reduced the cost to \$10,190.

## Product details

- Wilsonstone supplied the ivory coloured pavers (450x450x40mm). Phone (02) 4943 5479 for details on these and other products.
- Jody's throws and cushions were purchased from Eastern Flair in Newtown, Sydney. Phone (02) 9565 1499 for more information.
- Table and chairs were sourced from Dare Gallery at Crows Nest, Sydney. Phone (02) 9460 8669 for more 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 concrete mixer and the nail gun.



## Getaway details

### Accommodation:

The Phoenician Resort  
24-26 Queensland Avenue  
Broadbeach, Gold Coast  
Phone: (07) 5585 8888  
Web: [www.phoenician.com](http://www.phoenician.com)

Phoenician Spa Retreat  
Queensland Avenue  
Broadbeach, Queensland  
Phone: (07) 5585 8891  
Fax: (07) 5570 3820  
Web: [www.phoenician-spa-retreat.com.au](http://www.phoenician-spa-retreat.com.au)



Restaurant B  
Shop 8, 20 Tedder Avenue  
Main Beach  
Phone: (07) 5564 0900

Conrad Jupiters Casino  
Charters Towers Restaurant  
Broadbeach Island  
Gold Coast  
Phone: (07) 5592 8100  
Web: [www.conrad.com.au](http://www.conrad.com.au)

## Acknowledgements

Design by:



Prue Keen  
Inside Out Urban Garden Living  
129-131 Balmain Road  
Leichhardt, NSW  
Phone: (02) 9572 8311

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

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