

BACKYARD BLITZ

Puppy Paradise

Every second household in Australia has a family dog, yet the common belief is that dogs and gardens cannot comfortably co-exist! Must all gardens suffer from the attentions of "man's best friend"?

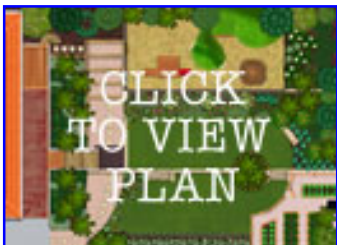
Blitz felt it was time to tackle this dilemma, and let the team create a simple and successful solution that provides an entertaining space for the pet pooch, while maintaining an attractive and functional garden for the rest of the family. This makeover, with dozens of doggy ideas, is for a family who have devoted their time and their garden to raising service dogs through the Assistance Dogs Australia scheme for the disabled community.



Design intent

The concept was to design a garden that was both attractive, practical and dog friendly. The decision was taken to segregate the dogs from the rest of the garden while in their destructive stage, with 1500mm pool fencing that could be removed when the puppies had matured. The dog area was filled with activity equipment and toys to occupy them while detained, which decreases the chance of them acquiring destructive habits.

In turn, the vegetable garden was also treated as a separate area and attractively fenced off, for the times the puppies are allowed free rein in the garden. The overall garden design was sympathetic to the age of the house – mindful to blend with, rather than conflict, with the pre-existing plantings.



Design ideas

Choose old/repro and recycled product more sympathetic to older dwellings rather than new. You'll find the end result less jarring and obvious.

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

A liquidambar tree was removed by a qualified arborist and a stump grinder was used to remove the stump.

Garden elements

Stairs: Stirrups were put in ground with concrete and left overnight to set. The landing was cantilevered off the existing deck and supported with posts. The stringers and steps were made on the ground out of merbau (300mmx50mm) and were assembled together. The steps were then lifted into place and bolted to the two bottom posts, which were attached to stirrups. Hand rails and balustrades were then put into place. Hand rails and balustrades were made out of merbau to match existing verandah.

Stepping stones: Stepping stones were marked out and set in sand and cement. These adjoined a tiered area made out of treated pine (100mmx200mm sleepers) and infilled with a decomposed granite and compacted with a sprinkle of cement mixed in. A plate compactor was used to compact the area.

Gazebo: Jamie built a gazebo, Bali style with thatched roof. This came in kit form. Once the bottom frame was assembled, we put this on the ground and marked out the four corners which is where we concreted in 4 treated pine round posts. On completion we nailed into place the bottom frame and the top frame, the rafters and roof battens put in last over the top frame. The grass thatching was attached at 60mm intervals. We then nailed merbau decking to the bottom frame for our raised floor area.



Dog play structure: A raised landing was built with a ramp and slippery dip attached to it. This was made by concreting four posts in the ground, a perimeter framing of 140mmx45mm treated pine timber and a couple of internal bearers within the frame. We then nailed merbau hardwood decking onto this. We then attached a ramp made of out of treated pine rails and decking and on the other side we attached a plastic slippery dip.

Dog house: We also put in a pipe (500mm diameter) of which we cut all the way through at an angle and then reversing those angels, were able to put a 'dog leg' (angled) pipe into original pipe. We proceeded to bury this leaving the two ends open. We then covered the soil with artificial turf, spiking the ends into the soil using tent pegs to keep it in place. We built a heavy duty timber box frame for the hobbit hole which we then covered in 12mm compressed sheeting, screwing into place. We then covered in soil so that it appeared to be underground and then using artificial turf to cover the soil and fixed into place with tent pegs.

Hobbit fascia: A hobbit fascia was made out of 10mm compressed sheeting and Hebel block glued to the sheeting and carved. A similar effect could be achieved using paint instead of block.

Dog play area: The complete dog area was covered with Tarrago sand and surrounded by a pool fence 1500mm high and the posts.

Blitz Tipz: Posts were put into steel sleeves, and concreted into the ground allowing for the fence to be removed quickly and without damage.

Dog toys: Dog toys were then placed in the area.



Garden: Our existing site soil was a wonderful sandy loam, which has a good structure but can sometimes leach nutrients from the soil because of its good drainage properties. To improve water holding capacity and organic matter to the soil Jody incorporated a premium organic garden mix which is perfect for the majority of exotic species of plants used.

To add interest to some of our garden beds we mounded them. This was also to remedy large masses of roots we encountered from the pre-existing liquidambar, which made it extremely difficult to dig around.

To maintain the period feel of this unique home we chose plants popular to older style gardens and re-invented that eclectic planting theme to make the garden feel as if was created at the time of the house.



Plants

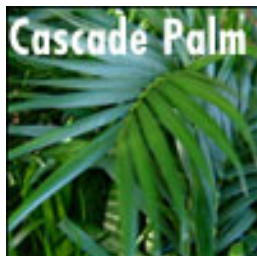
Shrubs: lasiandra (*Tibouchina 'Alstonville'*), gold dust plant (*Aucuba japonica*), natal glory bush (*Mackaya bella*), bird of paradise (*Strelitzia reginae*), jungle flame (*Ixora 'Coral Fire'*), shrimp plant (*Justicia adhadota*), Red justicia (*Odontonema strictum*), plumbago (*Plumbago 'Royal Cape'*), dracaena (*Dracaena surculosa*)

Trees: spotted silky oak (*Buckinghamia celsissima*), Eumundi quandong (*Elaeocarpus eumundi*)

Palms: bangalow (*Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*), cascade palm (*Chamaedorea cataractarum*)

Perennials: stream lily (*Helmholtzia glabberima*), lomandra (*Lomandra longifolia*), liriopse (*Liriopse 'Evergreen Giant'*), clivia (*Clivia Belgian Hybrid*)

Climber: Dipladenia (*Mandevilla 'Red Riding Hood'*)



Cost and availability

We used mature plants to create an instant effect for television. As a result, our total cost for plants and materials was \$27,966. The use of smaller plants would have reduced the cost to \$24,079.

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.
- All timber supplies and information came from Midcoast Timber Centres. Web: www.midcoasttimber.com.au
- Our dog toys came from Aussie Dog, PO Box 308, Ferntree Gully, Victoria. Phone: (03) 9752 3336; fax: (03) 9758 3020; web:www.aussiedog.com.au
- Our dog trainer, Steve Austin is Director of the HANROB Dog Training Academy, Hanrob Pet Care Centre, Lot 927 Princes Highway, Heathcote NSW 2233. Phone: (02) 8508 3222; fax: (02) 8508 3255; web:www.hanrob.com.au
- 1500x 1500 Bali style thatch roof came from Bali Style. Phone: 0418 299 580 and cost approximately \$2500.
- Woven wire fencing and ornamental wire gate around vegetable patch only available from McLure Garden and Fencing Products in Victoria. Freecall: 1800 065 849; web: www.steeraust.com.au/mclure
- Paving was Boral 'Bradstone' Old Town flagstones. Phone: 1300 134 002; web: www.boral.com.au/odg
- Pool fencing was supplied by Dunn & Ferrugia, Sydney. Phone: (02) 4731 6974
- Historic and recycled sandstone came from The Sydney Secondhand Sandstone Company. Phone: (02) 9905 7151; web:www.secondhandsandstone.com.au

Holiday Details

Breakfree Aanuka Beach Resort
Firman Drive
Coffs Harbour NSW
Phone: (02) 6652 7555
Web: www.breakfree.com.au

Liquid Assets Adventure Tours
328 Harbour Drive
Coffs Harbour NSW
Phone: (02) 6658 0850
Web: www.surfracting.com

Cougar 12 Fishing Charters
Coffs Harbour International Marina
First Finger, Pier 1
Coffs Harbour NSW
Phone: (02) 6651 6715
Web: www.cougarcat12.com.au

F1 Go Karting
Phil Hawthorn Drive
Coffs Harbour NSW
Phone: (02) 6658 5664

Assistance Dogs Australia

Assistance Dogs Australia obtains, trains and maintains dogs in community settings to assist people with their disabilities, to give them more confidence and to help them achieve a greater level of independence. To make a donation, or if you would like more information about our services, or to volunteer your time, please contact us.

Phone: Toll Free Number: 1800 688 364
Web: www.assistancedogs.org.au

Acknowledgements

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

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