

BACKYARD BLITZ

Stylish Serenity



Nancy and Tony Hokin have been married for more than 30 years. Their love of animals - and racing greyhounds in particular - led them to make their home on a 25 acre property at the foot of the Blue Mountains. Commitment to the farm and their animals has meant that the Hokins have not taken a holiday for more than eight years. Jody Hokin nominated her parents for a well-deserved break from the farm and to say thank you for their devotion to and support for her brother and herself.

All gardens have unique features that provide focal points worth enhancing. This garden has beautiful rural vistas and a countryside ambience. Landscape designer Matthew Cantwell from Secret Gardens of Sydney developed a design that enhanced the rural outlook while defining the garden around the house. Sandstone- coloured stepping stones surrounded by river pebbles lead away from the house through massed plantings of kangaroo paw and ornamental grasses. A large formal pond flanks a deck with open wire balustrades that have been used to bring the rural views into the garden.



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 more 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

When the Blitz team arrived the rear garden contained scattered gum trees and poorly performing turf. Existing fences were realigned, turf removed and bulk materials brought in with a bobcat.

Materials

Decking: timber decking should always be constructed with appropriate preservative treated, structurally graded timber. This deck was built by combining posts (H4, 90x90mm), bearers (H3,190x45mm), joists (H3, 90x45mm) and decking boards (H3, 90x22mm). The posts were installed in ground using rapidset concrete and all timbers connected using galvanised bolts. Decking boards are nailed down using spiral shanked nails and a nail gun. The decking posts extend above the deck to support stainless steel wire balustrade connected to eyebolts using turnbuckles, thimbles and swages.

Blitz Tipz: Timber is sold in 300mm increments up to about 6m. Planning your deck to finish at a length a little less than an available timber length will reduce waste and require less work.



Stepping stones: large unit concrete pavers (450x450x40mm) from Stone Masonry laid into 3:1 sand/cement mix over an existing concrete slab provide an informal path. Compacted roadbase (100mm thick) and 3:1 sand/cement mix provides a solid sub-base for pavers laid through the garden.

Blitz Tipz: Cut a timber spacer to the desired length to make spacing your stepping stones accurate and simple.



Water feature: a 3m diameter polyethylene rain tank cut down to 300mm in height provides a simple to install water feature. Placed into an excavated hole and backfilled with coarse washed river sand to support the base and sides the pond is powered by a submersible low voltage pump (Contour 4200) and a low voltage transformer plugged into an existing power point. Washed Nepean river gravel helps hold the pump in place and reduces the water depth.

Blitz Tipz: Water features fall into a grey area of legislation that relates to pool fencing. Always consult your local council prior to installing a water feature to determine your responsibilities regarding child safety.



Rural fencing: star pickets (1.8m) and galvanised wire combine to create an effective barrier to keep horses away from the new deck whilst retaining the views. Gripples maintain tension in the wire and safety caps over the star pickets reduce the scratching hazard to stock. Painted silver they blend into the landscape.

Garden beds: Jody improved the existing site soil by ripping garden bed areas to about 200mm deep and incorporating an organic garden mix throughout. Forest fines mulch spread to a depth of 75mm will help to reduce weed regrowth and retain soil warmth and moisture.

Blitz Tipz: When selecting a mulch, consider and discuss the following features with the supplier; texture, colour, particle size, source, smell, soil binding potential, rate of breakdown and cost per cubic metre.

Plants

Strong architectural specimens surrounded by swathes of massed planting creates an exciting combination beneath the canopy of existing Eucalypts.

Shrubs: coast rosemary (*Westringia fruticosa*), laurustinus (*Viburnum tinus*), Japanese sago palm (*Cycas revoluta*), New Zealand flax (*Phormium tenax*), grass tree (*Xanthorrhoea australis*)

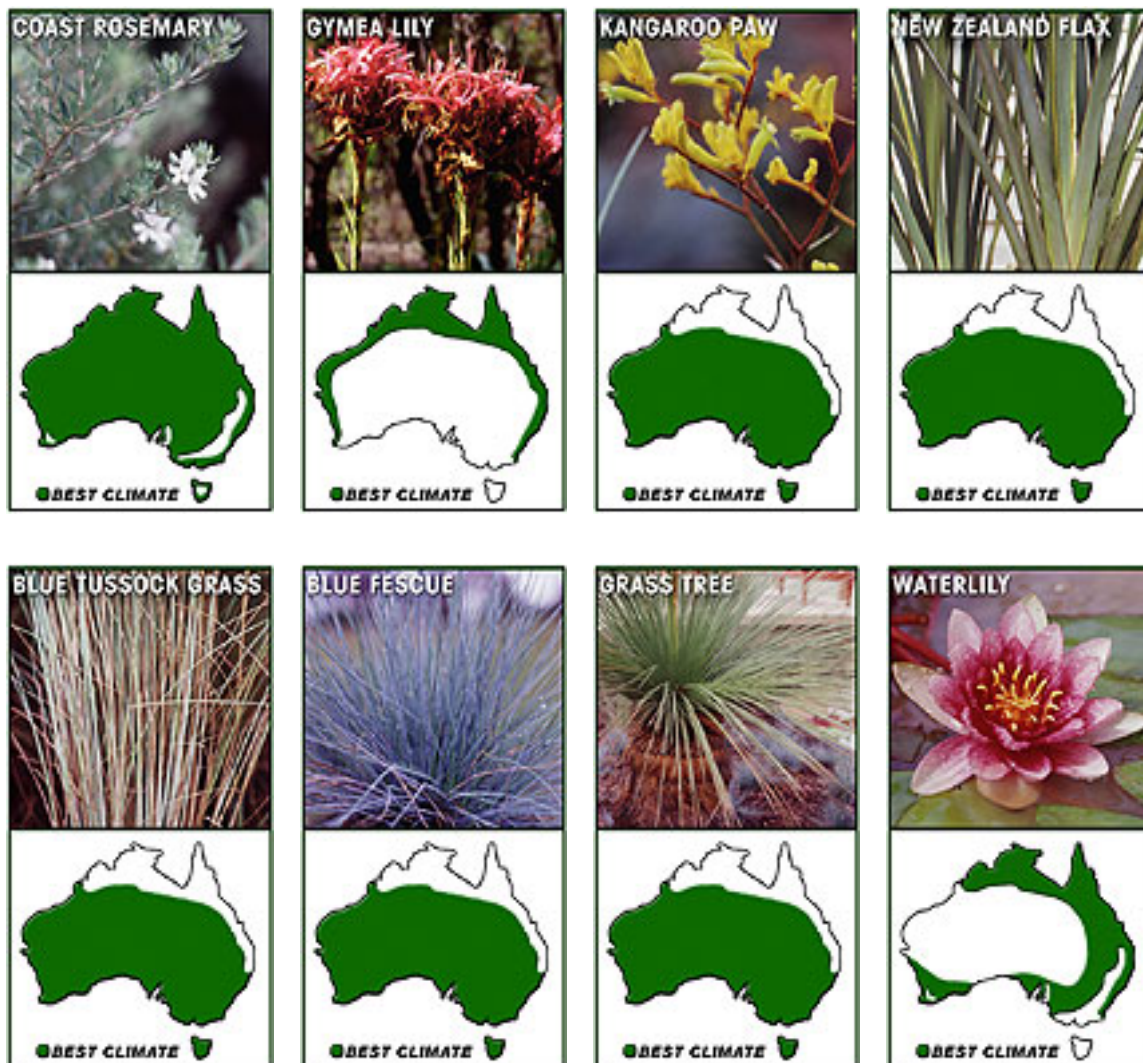
Perennials: kangaroo paw (*Anigozanthus flavidus* 'Yellow Gem'), gynea lily (*Doryanthes excelsa*),

Grasses: giant liriopie (Liriopie muscari 'Evergreen Giant'), blue tussock grass (*Poa labillardieri*), blue fescue (*Festuca glauca*)

Water plant: waterlily (*Nymphaea hybrids*)

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 \$13,100. This cost could be reduced to \$9560 by using smaller plants.



Product details

- City Rainwater Tanks in Sydney prepared and provided the large pond. They have a range of tanks to suit most situations. Phone: (02) 9623 2414 for more details.
- Sand smooth pavers (450x450mm) made by Stone Masonry in Sydney cost \$60 per square metre and are available from Amber outlets.
- Wire rope, thimbles, swages and turnbuckles are available from rural and boating supplies outlets in either galvanised or stainless steel finishes.
- Most of the plants we used are readily available at nurseries or ask your nursery to order them for you or advise similar varieties suited to your area. You may need to contact specialist nurseries for some plants. Your local nursery should be able to provide contacts to you.
- 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:

Westin Hotel
205 Collins St
Melbourne
Phone: (03) 9635 2222
Web: www.westin.com.au

Tours:

City River Cruises Vault 3 Princes Walk Melbourne Phone: (03) 9650 2214 Web: www.cityrivercruises.com.au	Victoria's Open Range Zoo K Road Werribee Park Phone: (03) 9731 9600 Web: www.zoo.org.au
"Mamma Mia!" Littlestar Services (Australia) Ltd Web: www.mamma-mia.com	Werribee Mansion K Road Werribee Park Phone: (03) 9741 2444 Web: www.parks.vic.gov.au

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