

BACKYARD BLITZ

Ship Shape

When Garry Lucas was away in East Timor serving with the Australian Navy it was a worrying time for his family. Garry was in a war zone and back home his backyard looked like a war zone too. Garry's family wanted to make it all ship shape before his return so the Blitz team came to the rescue. Before Garry returned from Timor they transformed his backyard into a peaceful paradise reminiscent of a ship sailing into a sunset of colourful bougainvilleas.



The plan was for a nautically themed garden. The bow of a ship is represented with lawn and decomposed granite. Directly ahead is a water feature backed with espaliered bougainvilleas on cargo netting. A pavilion sits like the bridge of the boat. Rope and ship's bollards complete the theme.



[click to view plan](#)

What we did

We completed the retaining wall by lining it with geotextile fabric and back filling (an ag. pipe was already in place for drainage). Using a bobcat the site was levelled and new soil brought in to replace existing clay. A pond and fountain was installed, a pavilion built, turf, decomposed granite and mingo grass used as ground cover. We planted the garden with advanced trees, climbers and shrubs.

Materials

Pavilion: treated pine logs (100mm), winged splits (100mm & 125mm), floorboards (140x22mm), Rapid Set concrete (40kg bags), galvanised nails (150mm), canvas cover and attaching rope, cargo netting and 'U' nails (optional). *Tools:* string line, circular saw, chain saw, shovel, hammer, drill.

Espalier frame: treated pine logs (100mm), winged splits (100mm), bolts, Rapid Set concrete. *Tools:* shovel, drill, saw.

Paving and lawn: decomposed granite (brown), off-white cement (small bag), treated pine garden edging (100x25mm) and pegs (50x25mm). *Tools:* plate compactor, topsoil leveller, hedge shears, garden hose, lawn roller.

Pond: polytrough (270 litre), low voltage pond pump, low voltage pond light, transformer, low voltage cable, conduit, elbows, glue, gel cap connectors, sikaflex 11FC, river sand, 2 ship's bollards (optional), ship's rope (optional). *Tools:* spade, screwdrivers, caulking gun, electrical pliers, saw.

Garden beds: plants (see list below), organic garden mix, organic mulch (eg rice hulls), budding tape (for espalier bougainvilleas). *Tools:* shovel, dust mask.

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.

Step-by-step

Pavilion

We built a canvas covered pavilion with rope cargo net for bougainvillea to climb over. We had the canvas cover made to our specifications by a canvas maker.

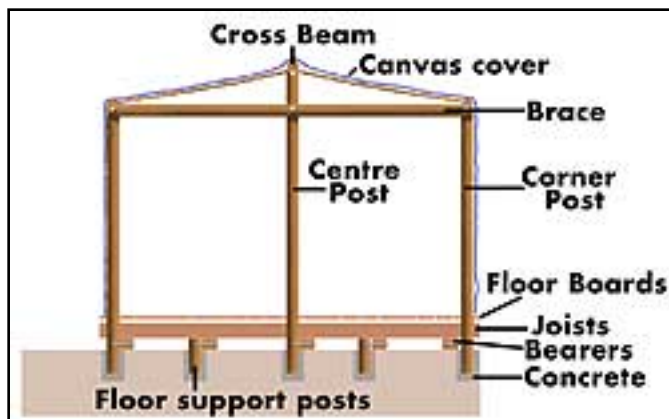
Step 1 Clear and level the site. Mark out the position of all the posts (corner posts, centre posts and floor support posts at 1m intervals), excavate the holes to 600mm. Cut the floor support posts to 1m lengths.

Step 2 Place all of the posts in the holes. Use a spirit level to ensure the post is exactly vertical. Half fill the hole with water then tip a bag of Rapid Set cement into the hole, watering as you go. The cement should be filled to the top of the hole. Hold the post in position for about 4 minutes while the cement starts to set. It will set in 15 minutes but leave it a further 3 hours before resuming work.

Blitz Tipz: Try not to disturb fresh concrete until it has cured. Rapid Set is best left overnight but with care you can start working around it within 3 hours.

Step 3 To begin construction of the floor, bolt 100x50mm bearers to the posts then evenly space 100x50mm joists across the bearers no greater than 450mm apart. Nail together with galvanised nails. Use a chain saw to cut any excess off the top of the support posts (see diagrams).

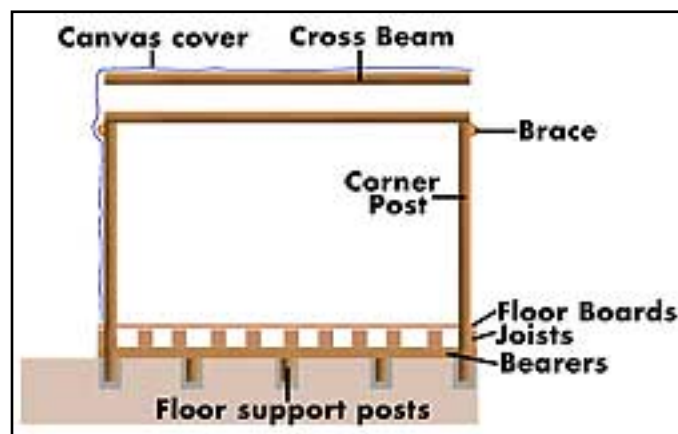
Step 4 Lay the floorboards across the joists keeping them even with a string line along one end. Nail into position and use a circular saw to trim the other end if needed.



Pavilion front

Step 5 Use a round log for the centre cross beam and winged splits for the side cross beams. Cut a 'V' into the top of the centre posts, lay the log cross beam into position and nail. Lay the side cross beams on top of the corner posts and nail down. Brace the front and back with a winged split running from the top of one corner post to the top of the other bolted to the centre post where they cross and nailed on the ends (see diagrams).

Step 6 Put the canvas cover into position and secure by roping it together. Cover the pavilion with cargo netting and secure along the bottom edges with galvanised 'U' nails.



Pavilion side

Espalier frame

We built a frame at the end of the pond to espalier bougainvillea over. We used 100mm logs, 100mm winged splits and cargo netting.

Step 1 Mark out the position of the end posts then follow Pavilion step 2 (above) to fix into position.

Step 2 Cut a winged split to the width of the posts, bolt into position using two bolts.

Step 3 Stretch cargo netting over the frame and secure with 'U' nails. Plant bougainvilleas and train them as an espalier by tying branches to the horizontal parts of the netting using budding tape.

Pond and fountain

We used a polyurethane horse trough as a pond liner and installed a submersible fountain pump and light. It was sunk to ground level. Two ship's bollards and ship's rope was used for decoration.

Step 1 Make a small hole in the wall of the liner near where you want to position the fountain pump. Place the pump and pond light in the liner and run the wires out through the hole. To seal the hole liberally apply sikaflex 11FC and allow to cure for 12 hours.

Step 2 Mark out the position of the pond and excavate down to the depth of the pond liner plus 20mm for a sand sub-base. Also excavate the trench for the low voltage cable.

Step 3 Mount the transformer near the electrical outlet and lay the conduit from the transformer to the pond location, cutting to length and inserting elbows where necessary, threading the cable through as you go.

Blitz Tipz: Wiggling the conduit as you push the cable through makes the job much easier.

Step 4 Place a layer of sand in the bottom of the hole about 20mm deep and lower the liner into position. Use a spirit level to level the pond, you may have to lift the liner and move the sand to achieve level.

Step 5 Connect the low voltage cable to the pump and light leads using gel cap connectors, fill the pond to one third its depth and test the pump. Check for leaks where the cables passes through the wall of the liner. Bury the cable and fill in the hole around the liner lightly compacting as you go. Fully fill the pond, switch on the pump and adjust to give the fountain effect you desire.

Step 6 Place a bollard on each side of the pond about 1m out. Drive treated pine pegs at the corners of the pond and on each side half-way along its length. Wind ship's rope around one of the bollards, then around the pond, nailing it to the pegs. Finally wind it around the other bollard and trim to length.



Final touches

The bow of the boat cutting through the water was represented in turf, decomposed granite and 'blue' mingo grass. Treated pine lawn edging was used to separate the different ground covers.



Step 1 - edging Level the site and mark out the lines for the lawn edging using a garden hose and spray marker paint. Excavate along the lines to a depth of 100mm, drive pegs at 1m intervals and nail the edging to the pegs.

Step 2 - decomposed granite Prepare the area to be paved by excavating to a depth of 100mm. Fill with decomposed granite and level with a topsoil leveller. Sprinkle off-white cement over the granite and lightly rake it in. Sprinkle with water then compact with a vibrating plate. Top up if necessary using the same procedure.

Step 3 - turf Use a rake or topsoil leveller to level the area. Check the final height relative to the decomposed granite and the edging. It may be necessary to excavate if too high, or add organic garden mix if too low. Lay out the turf, cutting to shape with hedge shears, roll and water.

Step 4 - Mingo grass Use a rake or topsoil leveller to level the area. Evenly space out the pots of grass about 150mm apart. Remove from pots and plant. Mulch with a 50mm layer of mulch (we used sterilised rice hulls) and water thoroughly.

Blitz Tipz: Rice hulls are best suited to mulching sheltered places. To keep them in position they should be heavily watered after being laid.

Garden beds and plants

We used mature banksias and blueberry ash as a screening hedge. Russelia was used to soften the look of the retaining wall. Gynea lilies and flax were used as accent plants.

Beds

Plant the garden keeping plants at the same depth as they were in their containers. Mulch with a 50mm layer of organic mulch (eg rice hulls) over the entire garden and water thoroughly.

Our plants

Russelia (*Russelia equisetiformis*), mingo grass (*Themeda australis* var. *mingo*), coast banksia (*Banksia integrifolia*), blueberry ash (*Elaeocarpus* 'Prima Donna'), flax (*Phormium*), gynea lily (*Doryanthes excelsa*), bougainvillea.



coast banksia



blueberry ash



bougainvillea



gymea lily



mingo grass



russelia - needs a sheltered micro-climate in cooler areas

Cost and availability

We used mature plants to create an instant effect for television. Our total cost of plants and materials was \$9150. Savings are possible using smaller plants (\$6915). Plants are available at nurseries or can be ordered in. Most other materials are available from large hardware stores, landscape suppliers or garden centres. Cargo netting was sourced from a salvage yard (Thunderbird Constructions, Annandale, NSW), the canvas from a canvas maker (Hornsby Canvas Co., Hornsby Heights, NSW) and the horse trough from a produce store (Elders Stockmans). The vibrating plate compactor and most of the other tools required are available for hire.

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