

BACKYARD BLITZ

Chip off the Old Block



Things didn't get off to an ideal start for newly weds Sandra and Simon Hockaday. Weeks out from their wedding, Sandra developed a debilitating virus, which has continued to this day. Simon pulled out all stops to ensure that Sandra made it down the aisle and he supported them and their mortgage on his apprentice's wage. The day Simon qualified as a carpenter he lost his job and unable to afford to buy tools has had to survive on casual handyman jobs. Sandra just wanted something good to happen for a change.....

Watch as Blitz transforms their Melbourne backyard into a tropical paradise while we give Simon a couple of extra surprises that he probably wasn't expecting!



Design brief

Jim Fogarty's design brief was to create a 'tropical' garden in a cool climate zone.

The tropical effect was achieved using vibrant colour in both the structures and plant foliage. Plants were chosen for their bold and textured foliage. The whole makeover came together with the look of a modern tropical resort – in stark contrast to the shabby inner Melbourne garden it once was.

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

Clear the garden of unwanted debris and vegetation.

Once the design is complete, mark it out on the ground with aerosol survey paint and ensure that everything fits and make any necessary adjustments.

What we did

The existing garden shed was relocated to another area, and rather than dismantle and rebuild it, strong timbers were placed underneath and lifted as one.

Blitz tip: When moving a shed this way, call in all favours from mates, and have the new area already levelled and prepared to save double lifting.

We used a bobcat to tear down the dangerous old verandah structure but suggest taking down sheets and timbers separately if not sure how it is attached to the main dwelling.

A trench, 400mm wide x 200mm deep was excavated, and a concrete footing was poured. An accelerant in the mix was used so we could start building earlier.

Blitz tip: Always use steel reinforced concrete footing for walls, particularly when the ground appears unstable or the wall is to be used for retaining.

The first course of Hebel block was laid on a 4:1 mortar bed. This helps to establish an even first course, which subsequently makes it easier to keep further courses level. Hebel adhesive can then be used to lay the other courses.

Blitz tip: Using Hebel for projects such as this is easy as the blocks are light and can be cut to size using a handsaw.

Note: Hebel block is not designed to be used sub-soil or for retaining walls. Hebel should always be sealed with an appropriate product – check with your stockist.



Screens and decks: Screens were created using 75x75mm H4 treated pine posts set in rapidset concrete with blueboard panels fixed with masonry nails and then painted.

Blitz tip: For stability, a post should have at least a third of its length in-ground, eg: a 2400mm post should have 800mm in the ground.

The timber deck was constructed using 90x90mm H4 treated pine posts, set in-ground to a depth of 500mm using rapidset concrete at 1700mm spacings. The 190x45mm bearers were bolted to the posts then joists at 450mm centres were skew nailed on top. Where the joists joined to the house bearers, galvanised joist hangers were used. The 90x19mm treated pine decking boards were then laid using twisted galvanised or stainless steel nails for fixing.

Blitz tip: Always use galvanised or stainless steel nails and screws for fixing treated pine products. Mild steel or zinc coated will corrode over time.

A pink primed, 90x19mm timber fascia board was then attached around the verandah edge to give a neat, finished appearance. It was then painted.

A step was built at the edge of the verandah for access to the lawn area.

Blitz tip: The ideal height for a step riser is between 150 and 180mm, the tread width should be no less than 300mm for safe passage.

To stabilise the compacted 'lilydale toppings' gravel paths, off white cement was spread over the top and raked in. It was then compacted and lightly hosed down.



Water tank: A small galvanised rainwater tank was installed and connected to the house downpipe.

Blitz tip: Before installing a tank, get a water solutions specialist to assess the size that best suits your needs. Most people end up with a tank that is too small for their requirements.

Blitz tip: Check with your local water authority for any subsidies that may be available for fitting rainwater tanks.



Plants

Trees: weeping mulberry (*Morus alba* 'Pendula'), tree aloe (*Aloe bainesii*), cabbage tree (*Cussonia paniculata*)

Shrubs: lasiandra (*Tibouchina* 'Edwardsii'), luma (*Luma apiculata*), puka pukanui (*Meryta sinclairii*)

Palms: bangalow palm (*Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*)

Perennials: lily turf (*Liriope* 'Evergreen Giant'), New Zealand flax (*Phormium* "Yellow Wave"), canna lily (*Canna* 'Tropicanna'), furcraea (*Furcraea bedinghausii*)



Jody's top five cool climate 'tropical' plants:

Giant ornamental rhubarb (*Gunnera manicata*)

Bird of Paradise (*Strelitzia reginae*)

Mandevilla (*Mandevilla* sp.)

Dianella (*Dianella* 'Border Silver' and 'Border Gold')

Chinese fan palm (*Trachycarpus fortunei*)

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 \$14,155. The use of smaller plants would have reduced the cost to \$11,277.

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 come from Midcoast Timber Centres. Website: www.midcoasttimber.com.au
- Big Round Fountain supplied by Patrick McCauley Design P/L, 218 Grange Road, Fairfield Vic. Cost: \$700. Phone: (03) 9497 3600. Website: www.patrickmccauleydesign.com.au
- Link Edge aluminium garden edging supplied by Link Plus, 32-34 Cormack Rd, Wingfield SA. Cost rrp: \$18 per 3 metre length. Phone: (08) 8347 4447. Email: info@linkplus.com.au Web: ww.linkplus.com.au
- Desert Fawn pavers were supplied by Austral. Cost: \$15.45 m2. See website for local distributor www.australbricks.com.au

- Hebel block – 600x200x200mm available through select hardware and stockists. See CSR website for your local distributor www.csr.com.au or phone 1300 369 448.
- The 360 litre galvanised rainwater tank was supplied by Bluescope Water. Cost: \$341. For local stockist phone 1800 654 774 or website: www.bluescopewater.com
- Professional power tools supplied by Makita, phone: 1300 364 342 website: www.makita.com.au

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Acknowledgements

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