

BACKYARD BLITZ

Drainage Dilemma



Good gardens are continually evolving and are thus never actually 'finished'. But this garden in Sydney's southern suburbs was never really started. Tania Lauricella has been begging her husband Michael to improve the garden for years, but with two jobs and three children, Michael has been flat out just keeping the lawns mowed. Knowing he would never have the time to create the type of garden she wanted, Tania asked the Backyard Blitz team for their help. In a cunning twist, Michael was made an accomplice in the surprise makeover for his wife.

Landscape Designer Matthew Cantwell from Secret Gardens of Sydney created an exciting rainforest garden that fully utilised the backyard's unique space and boggy soils. An existing deck was extended to surround large bangalow palms. A previously damp and weed covered patch in the back corner was transformed into a paved entertaining area surrounded by flowering rainforest trees and ferns. And now a central lawn provides valuable playing space and doubles as a drainage collection point for this damp garden.

[Click here to view plan](#)



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 required.

Note: On your plan show the locations of any services (water and sewerage pipes, power and phone lines, etc) so you can avoid damaging them during the makeover.

Permits and approval: check with your local council regarding earthwork and drainage regulations. If you are changing existing levels or installing drainage ensure that no water run-off is directed towards neighbouring properties. Any water entering the stormwater system must be free from debris and sediment.

Getting started

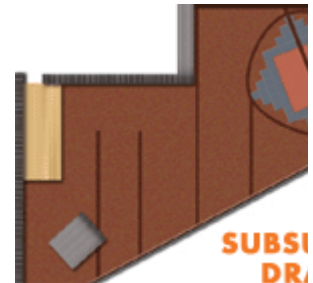
The challenges of this small sloping site were compounded by poor drainage. Large trees were retained but all other vegetation was stripped from the site. Extensive subsurface drainage was installed before the commencement of above ground work.

Materials

Drainage: subsurface drainage is a specialised area and professional advice should always be sought if your property has major drainage problems. Nigel and Jamie installed a series of agricultural drains (65mm) in trenches throughout the garden to direct excess water towards an existing council easement.

Geotextile fabric was used to provide a sediment barrier around a 50mm thick layer of blue metal (20mm particles) surrounding agricultural pipe.

Blitz Tipz: Coarse washed river sand is an alternative to blue metal for backfilling around covered agricultural pipes.



Decking: all structures with exposed timbers should be constructed from timbers treated with an appropriate preservative. Scott used H4 treated pine posts (90x90mm) installed in-ground in rapid setting concrete. Bearers (140x50mm) were attached using two galvanised 12mm bolts per post. Joists (90x45mm) were skew nailed on top of bearers with decking boards laid over the top and connected with spiral-shanked stainless steel nails.

BlitzTipz: An alternative deck construction technique is to position posts on galvanised stirrups set in concrete footings to keep post ends away from the ground.

Paving: a level entertaining area has been created in the rear corner of the garden using a combination of large concrete pavers (400x400mm, Stepstone) and clay pavers (230x115mm, Havenbrick). Compacted roadbase and coarse washed river sand produced a solid, level base for the paving. Nigel laid a staggered perimeter of large charcoal pavers around a central panel of smaller clay pavers in a basket weave pattern. Grouting sand (Sydney sand) swept through all joints helped bond the pavers to each other while a rapidset sand/cement haunch was used to prevent the bedding sand from washing away. A decorative mulch of scoria gravel was used to blend the paved area into the surrounding garden beds. **Blitz Tipz:** If large amounts of fill are required to achieve desired paving levels, spread roadbase in 100mm layers and compact it before spreading another layer over the top.



© Burke's Backyard 2003

Burke's Backyard and Backyard Blitz do not accept payment to promote products. All recommendations are genuine.

Details on the fact sheets are accurate at the time of publishing, however prices and contact information are not updated and may change.