

# BACKYARD BLITZ

## Focal Point



Chris and Beatie Parsons bought their house in desperation having missed out on so many others in their search for a new home. The house was not what they had in mind but several years of hard work have transformed it into the home they now love. Another transformation took place during the renovations with Beatie retraining herself to start a new career following her retrenchment from the banking industry. Chris was so proud of his wife he wanted to surprise her with a new backyard to relax in following all her hard work and study.



## Design intent

Landscape designer, Matthew Cantwell, from Secret Gardens of Sydney has created a contemporary garden that meets all of the owners needs for this small outdoor room. Paving and gravel mulch creates interest at ground level while a timber structure provides the framework to a water trough, overhead planting and built in seating. A limited palette of foliage plants provides unity throughout the design and will keep maintenance to a minimum. **Design ideas:** This small garden has a reason to be used now that it has a focal point in the form of the timber water feature and bench seating. A sense of intrigue has also been created by partially screening views to the garden with the clever placement of foliage plants. A glimpse of a focal point is a great design tool to encourage people out 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 required amounts of materials.

**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 approvals: Check with your local council regarding regulations about water features. If your water feature is deeper 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

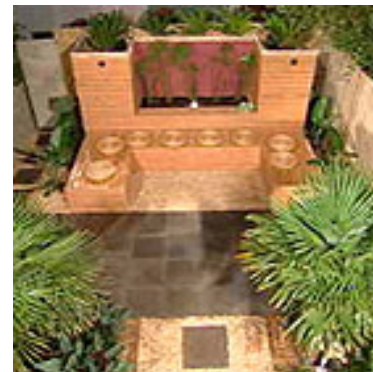
A bobcat was used to remove existing concrete and to excavate soil to subgrade levels for paving and garden beds. Post holes for the central structure and new fencing were drilled with the auger attachment on the bobcat.

## Garden elements



**Timber feature:** Scott and Jamie built a practical and attractive timber structure as the centre piece to the garden. A solid frame was created using treated pine posts (H4, 90x90mm) bearers (H3, 140x45mm) and joists (H3, 90x45mm). Posts were installed in the ground in rapid setting concrete, support bearers bolted in place with galvanised cup head bolts. Joists were skew nailed in the same manner as used for deck construction. Decking timbers were connected to the face of the structure with spiral shanked decking nails and stained with decking oil. **Blitz Tipz:** Scott used a nail gun for speed and ease of construction but screws can also be used to attach the decking boards to the face of the framework.

**Water feature:** A prefabricated, black fibreglass pond shell (2200x600x300mm) seated within the timber frame described above, acts as a reflective pond to cast illumination from a submersible low voltage light onto the backing board behind. A low voltage, submersible pump (2400 litres/hr) creates a ripple effect on the water surface. The pond pump is powered by a low voltage transformer that reduces the 240 volt household power source to 24 volts. Tall water plants soften the structure and cast dancing silhouettes for extra visual interest at night. **Blitz Tipz:** Remember that water is heavy and this feature is well supported by a solid timber framework. 1 litre of water weighs 1 kilogram.





**Paving:** Nigel laid large reconstituted sandstone pavers (495x495x40mm) in a geometric pattern that helps to define the shape of the garden beds. Compacted roadbase creates a solid subgrade whilst coarse washed river sand provides a level bed for the pavers. Fine grained grouting sand swept between the large pavers helps to lock them in place while a quick setting concrete haunch prevents the bedding sand from washing away. **Blitz Tip:** Nigel connected some paver beading to the top of pavers surrounding air vents, with construction adhesive to prevent water from flowing beneath the house.



**Fencing:** Jamie and Scott replaced the rotting side fence with a combined retaining wall and paling fence. Treated pine fence posts (three hole) installed vertically in ground in rapid setting concrete support treated pine sleepers (2400x200x75mm) nailed horizontally to the posts. Pine fence rails slipped through the holes in each post are skew nailed in place to support pine palings nailed against the rails. **Blitz Tip:** Only use appropriately treated pine sleepers for retaining walls as non-treated sleepers will eventually rot.

## Plants

Hardy and attractive palms, and clumping groundcovers are an elegant complement to the built landscape while needing minimal levels of care.

**Palm:** Chinese windmill palm (*Trachycarpus fortunei*)

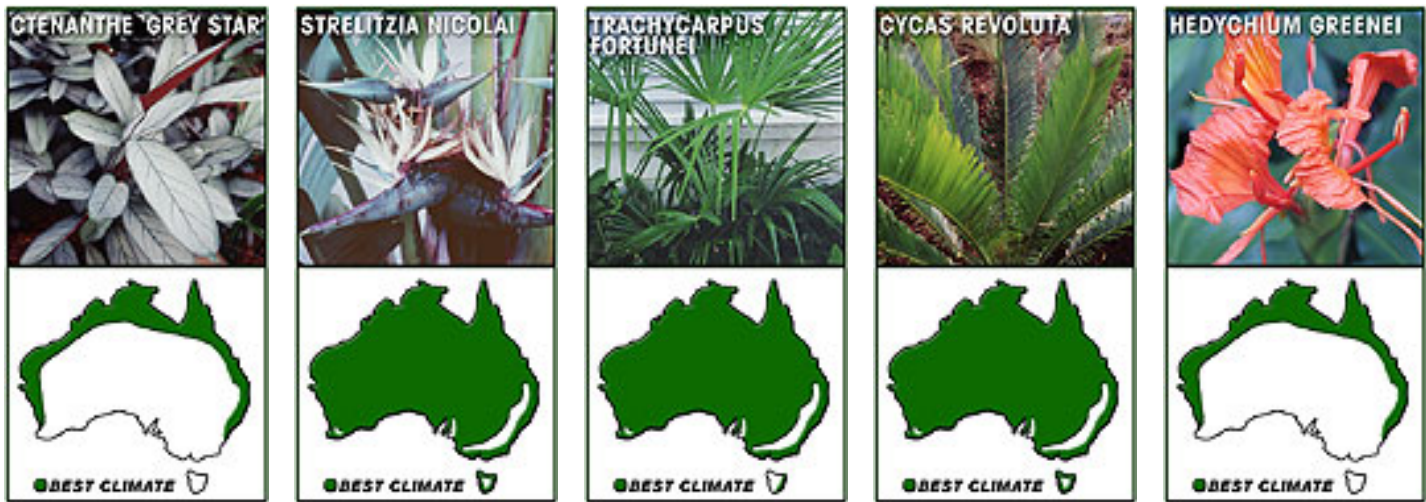
**Shrub:** cycad (*Cycas revoluta*)

**Perennials:** giant bird of paradise (*Strelitzia nicolai*), ctenanthe (*Ctenanthe 'Grey Star'*), hedychium (*Hedychium greenei*)

**Groundcovers:** lirioppe 'Evergreen Giant' (*Lirioppe muscari 'Evergreen Giant'*)

**Water plants:** papyrus (*Cyperus papyrus*)





## 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 \$10,370. The use of smaller plants would have reduced the cost to \$8,311.

## Product details

- Large pavers cost about \$80 per square metre from Antiquestone in Sydney. Phone (02) 9666 8333.
- All pond elements were purchased from Contour Ponds and Pumps in Sydney. Phone (02) 9690 2600 for more details.
- Low voltage lights were supplied by Light Up Australia in Sydney. Phone (02) 9419 4007. For further details and prices.
- 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 bobcat and the nail gun.



## Getaway details

### Accommodation:

Kims Beach Hideaway  
Charlton Street Toowoomb Bay NSW  
PO Box 1, Toowoomb Bay NSW  
Phone: (02) 4332 1566  
Fax: (02) 4333 1544  
[www.kims.com.au](http://www.kims.com.au)



Glenworth Valley Horseriding  
69 Cooks Rd  
Peats Ridge NSW  
Phone: 02 4375 1222  
Fax: 02 4375 1195  
www.glenworth.com.au

### Acknowledgments

Design by: Matthew Cantwell from Secret Gardens of Sydney; phone (02) 9365 6533.



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

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