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RAISE THE BAR WITH BLOCKS

Even if you've just got a spare corner of your outdoor area to fill, you can add mid-century minimalist style by building a concrete block bar.



Chilling out in

PALM SPRINGS

Take inspiration from the retro cool of this desert oasis, which is perfectly suited to the Aussie lifestyle

EASY STEPS TO YOUR BLOCK BAR

Gather your supplies

- 190 x 190 x 190mm concrete blocks
- Brickie's sand (1 bag per sqm of wall)
- GP cement (1 bag per sqm of wall)
- Bricktor reinforcing mesh
- Benctop 90 x 42mm finger jointed merbau

You'll also need

Measuring tape; 50 x 50mm steel post for guide rail; clamps; spirit level; stringline; bricklayer's line blocks; wheelbarrow; shovel; mortar plasticiser; brickie's trowel; mortar jointer or 10mm dowel; white exterior paint; painting equipment; circular saw; hammer; chisel; drill; countersinking drill bit; 75mm galvanised wood screws; merbau decking oil



STEP 5



STEP 6

STEP 1

Mark position of blockwork. Working from 1 post, measure the multiple of blocks plus a 10mm mortar joint between them. Here, there are 10 blocks of 190mm, plus nine 10mm gaps between them, which means the wall finishes 1990mm from the post. This also coincides with the post on the adjacent side, where the other leg of the bar walls will run to.

STEP 2 At the end of the wall, set up a guide rail, here a 50 x 50mm steel post, to help you build the wall straight and even. Make one face of the rail in line with the front of the block wall and clamp the top to the pergola, making sure it is plumb. Make a mark every 200mm up the rail from the bottom to show the level of your block courses. Ensure it won't move by temporarily placing blocks against it. Set up a similar rail at the other end to act as a guide there. Run a stringline between the 2 guides at the first

200mm mark, held in place by bricklayer's line blocks.

STEP 3 Mix mortar in a wheelbarrow. Mortar is made up of brickie's sand and cement in the ratio 4:1 and mixed with water. The addition of a mortar plasticiser into the water will make the mix easier to work. The mix should be sufficiently stiff that it holds its shape when you run a trowel through it, but sufficiently runny that it offers little resistance when a block is pushed into it.

STEP 4 Starting at the rail, lay a bed of mortar the width of the block and about 700mm long. Use your trowel to make a furrow down the centre. Lay your first block against the rail

so the top edge meets the stringline strung between your guides.

STEP 5 Butter the end of a block by using your trowel to scrape a lump of mortar along 3 edges.

STEP 6 Butt this block into the first block laid and press down into the mortar bed so the top edge meets the stringline. Continue buttering the edges of blocks and laying them against the last so the edge meets the stringline. If you lay the block and the edge goes below the stringline, your mortar bed is not high enough. Remove the block and re-lay it.

STEP 7 Continue putting mortar down and laying your blocks. Measure how much distance you



STEP 7



STEP 9



STEP 10

have left to lay to ensure your blocklaying is tracking well and you're not creeping out of line. Also check you are level with a spirit level on top of the blocks. Scrape off excess mortar that has squeezed out between the blocks with the back of your trowel to make it flush.

STEP 8 To start laying the next course, move the line blocks on both ends up to the second 200mm mark on your guides. Lay the second row as you did the first, lining up the blocks with the ones on the course below.

STEP 9 Before laying the mortar bed for the next course, roll out a length of Bricktor. As the stacked design of the blocks is not inherently strong, this will help to reinforce the wall. Also cut a strip of Bricktor to suit the length of the other wall and bed it into the wall, poking out the side. This will help bond the walls together.

STEP 10 Continue laying the courses of the wall in this manner, laying Bricktor in every second course poking a length out the side that will go into the second wall.

STEP 11 Once laid, go back over your block wall and make sure all the joints are filled with mortar with the back of your trowel.

STEP 12 Use a jointer, or a piece of 10mm dowel, to neatly round the mortar joints between the blocks before it dries.



ANYONE FOR A MARGARITA?
High-backed chairs make your block bar the perfect spot to while away the afternoon with a cocktail or two.



STEP 11



STEP 12



STEP 13



STEP 14



STEP 17



STEP 18

STEP 13 Repeat the whole process to lay blocks along the other side of the bar. Leave mortar to dry.

STEP 14 Once mortar has fully dried. Apply 2 coats of white exterior paint to the blockwork.

STEP 15 The benchtop is made of 2 pieces that interlock in the corner and sit on the blockwork. To determine length of longest benchtop piece, measure the distance from the post to the end of one wall and add 48mm. This will give your bench an overall overhang of 90mm when the edge is attached. Cut the remaining 4 pieces for your benchtop, reducing the length by 90mm for each piece when compared to the last.

STEP 16 Cut two 450mm long cleats to join benchtop timbers. 48mm from 1 end, mark out for a housing to suit the width of your blocks and 15mm deep. Use circular saw set to cut 15mm deep to make multiple cuts through the waste timber area, then use hammer and chisel to remove waste and smooth housing.

STEP 17 Layout benchtop timber on your workbench in order from longest to shortest and make one end flush. Clamp together to hold. Lay cleat on timbers flush with this end with housing facing up and closest to the longest benchtop piece. Pre-drill with countersinking drill bit and screw through cleat

into benchtop timbers using 75mm screws. Use 2 screws per benchtop timber.

STEP 18 Place second cleat at other end of benchtop timbers so edge is flush with end of shortest benchtop timber.

STEP 19 Cut short edge timber to match length of shortest benchtop timber. Place against this timber so it overhangs flush edge by 42mm and is short of staggered edge by 42mm. Pre-drill and screw through edge timber into benchtop and cleats.

STEP 20 Cut long edge timber so it is 84mm longer than the longest benchtop timber. Place against this timber so it overhangs each end by 42mm and screw together.



STEP 19



STEP 20



STEP 21

STEP 21 Cut and fit edging for square end of benchtop. Make it out of 2 pieces leaving a gap between to suit the width and position of the post in relation to the blockwork.

STEP 22 Fit the benchtop so housing in the cleats sit over the blockwork and the end edging slots around the post.

STEP 23 Measure and cut length of timbers for benchtop to sit on other wall. Repeat Steps 16-22 to construct benchtop for this wall. Sit on wall and slot into other benchtop piece. Pre-drill and screw through edging on outside corner of benchtop.

STEP 24 Cut and fit cleat to go over the join under the inside corner of the benchtop. Pre-drill and screw in place, making sure you go into both sides of the join.

STEP 25 Coat benchtop with 2 coats of decking oil, allowing to dry after each coat.



STEP 22



STEP 23



STEP 24



STEP 25

“Crisp white with pops of contrasting colour are hallmarks of the Palm Springs style”