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## SMALL SPACE big ideas

It's a retreat, the best kind ever, and one where you win the battle of the backyard

**a** small back garden can be hard work, just because it is small. The idea here is to abandon the great Australian dream of a lush lawn and make the backyard an outdoor extension of your home. It's easy to maintain, easy to entertain in and very easy to retreat to when you want some peace and quiet. Here's how to do it. ►



## DECKS

Instead of keeping the turf and trying to maintain it, rip it out and start the garden from scratch. Once bare, the garden floor is made up of three offset timber decks. Each can be used as a separate space, but they also overlap by 900mm so there is a straight thoroughfare from one end of the garden to the other.

Having three separate decks creates interest in the garden and distracts you from the fact the area is quite small.

The first deck is about 3 x 2.2m, the second deck is 2.4 x 1.8m and the third deck 2.6 x 2.4m. Plants will fill the spaces on the edges of the decks.

### Gather your supplies

- 200 x 75mm x 3m treated pine sleepers
- 86 x 19mm blackbutt decking

### You'll also need

Rakes; circular saw; drill; 100mm batten screws for treated pine; countersinking bit; 50mm stainless steel screws; 4mm plastic spacers; chalkline; deck cleaner; natural decking oil; decking oil applicator

### Here's how

**STEP 1** Use rakes to clear ground and make level.

**STEP 2** Cut sleepers to the length required and screw together using 100mm batten screws, drilling in 2 screws per join. Space sleepers >

### STEPS



STEP 1



STEP 2

## STEPS

on the inside of the frame evenly, but no more than 400mm apart.

**STEP 3** Place first decking board so edge is flush with back of frame. Overhang at sides of frame by at least 40mm. Pre-drill using countersinking drill bit, then screw down using 50mm decking screws. Use 2 screws at each framing member.

**STEP 4** Lay out 5 more boards, using plastic deck spacers to maintain an even gap between them. Screw last board laid into frame.

**STEP 5** To ensure screws are all straight, use chalkline to mark a line on decking board between screws on first and last board. Pre-drill and screw each board to frame along chalked line.

**STEP 6** Repeat Steps 4 and 5 to continue laying decking. Occasionally measure from the last board laid to the end of the frame at each side and in the centre. If these measurements are different, adjust the gaps slightly on subsequent boards until they are the same.

**STEP 7** Use chalkline to mark decking with line of frame underneath at each side. Cut off overhanging decking with circular saw.

**STEP 8** Construct remaining deck frames and lay them in position. Screw together using 100mm batten screws.

**STEP 9** Repeat Steps 4 to 7 to lay remaining decking to frames.

**STEP 10** If possible, leave deck for 4-6 weeks for tannins to leach out of timber. Wash deck using a deck-cleaning product and leave to dry. Follow with 2 coats of decking oil. ▶



STEP 3



STEP 6



STEP 4



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9

## BACK WALL SCREEN PANELS

There are many decorative panels available now and, as well as adding depth and texture to a bare wall, the patterns create a stunning focal point without being overpowering or a distraction.

### Gather your supplies

- 1800 x 900mm Luminer screen panel

### You'll also need

- Drill; 5mm bit; 6.5mm masonry drill bit; 6.5mm nylon wall anchors; 50mm pan head screws

### Here's how

**STEP 1** Drill 5mm holes through each corner of the screens. Hold against wall and mark bricks through holes.

**STEP 2** Drill holes in wall for wall anchors using a masonry drill bit.

**STEP 3** Tap nylon anchors into the holes in the wall.

**STEP 4** Reposition panels on wall and screw through holes in screen into anchor to secure. ▶

“Outside walls can be just as easily decorated as inside walls”



Make a perfect sun trap, framed by the cooling effect of lush greenery.



STEP 3



STEP 4



## WHITE BOX

This modern cube seat and storage box, 400 x 450mm, is made of marine ply, held together with glue and nails. The top lifts off and can store cushions. You can also make a bench and storage box that can seat four people, about 1700 x 450mm, with a hinged lid. When finished, the bench and cubes sit on decks one and two, closest to the house.

### Gather your supplies

- Large sides 450 x 450 x 18mm marine ply
- Small sides 414 x 450 x 18mm marine ply
- Top and bottom 450 x 450 x 18mm marine ply
- Lid trim 25 x 8mm Tasmanian oak

### You'll also need

Polyurethane adhesive; finishing nail gun and nails; quick-drying filler; 120-grit sandpaper; router with 10mm rounding-over bit; circular saw with fence attachment; hammer; 20mm nails; oil-based undercoat; white enamel paint

### Here's how

**STEP 1** Glue and nail large and small sides together to form a cube 450mm square.

**STEP 2** Glue and nail top and



Stripe you lucky! This stylish bench will help set the scene on your deck.

“ This one is right out of the box: modern seating and convenient storage combined ”

### STEPS



STEP 1



STEP 2

bottom to side assembly. Leave 2 hours for glue to dry.

**STEP 3** Fill nail holes using quick-drying filler then sand.

**STEP 4** Use the router to go around all edges of the cube and round them.

**STEP 5** Using circular saw with the fence attachment, cut off 1 end of the cube 75mm from 1 end.

**STEP 6** Sand cutting marks from lid and from the edges where the router has been.

**STEP 7** Glue and with 20mm nails fix lid trim to inside of cube so it is about 10mm proud of the top edge.

**STEP 8** Apply undercoat to cube and let dry. Follow with 2 coats of enamel paint in white. ▶



## STEPS



## PLANTING

Choose plants that are suitable for your soil, your garden's aspect, your garden's size – big trees can overpower a small garden, although one medium sized tree in a corner can provide shade and interest – and your theme – tropical, cottage, coastal, Mediterranean, succulent, or whatever takes your fancy.

### Gather your supplies

- Plants
- Bucket
- Spade or shovel
- Mulch

### Here's how

**STEP 1** Give your greenery a very good soaking before you plant. If they're small enough, put them in a bucket filled with water.

**STEP 2** Dig a hole twice as wide as the potted plant so the roots grow easily into their new medium. Keep removed soil close to hole.

**STEP 3** Fill hole with water and allow to drain.

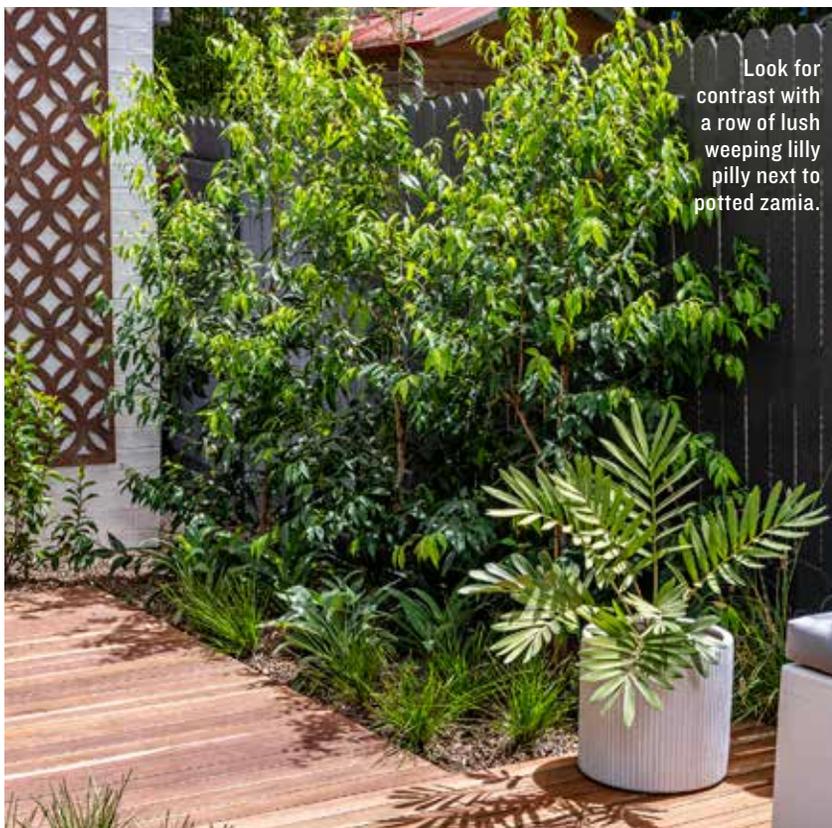
**STEP 4** Remove plant from pot and tease out roots. Put in hole and hold upright as you return soil to hole.

**STEP 5** Press in soil firmly. Repeat with all other plants. Water garden well all over.

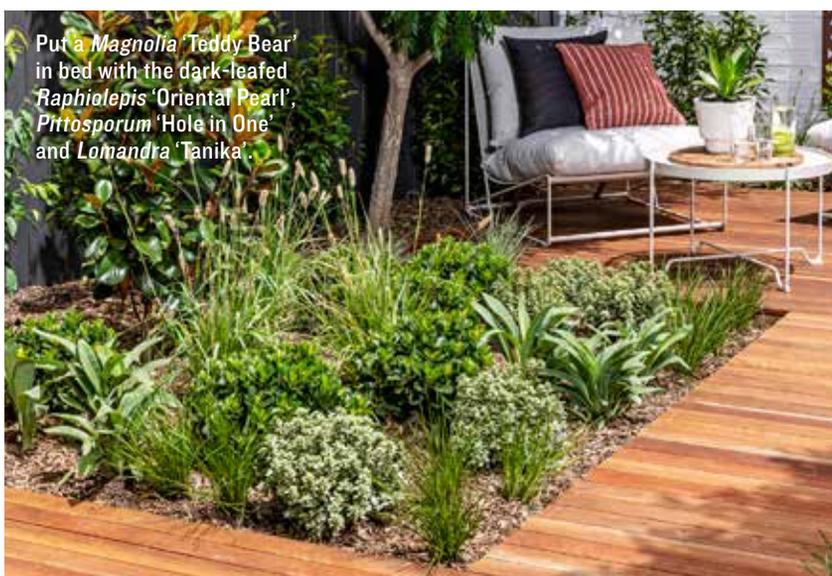
**STEP 6** Lay mulch. ■

### STOCKIST

Bunnings, [bunnings.com.au](http://bunnings.com.au) 200 x 75mm x 3m Ironwood classic treated pine sleepers, \$25.35/m. Boral 86 x 19mm blackbutt KD decking, \$6.98/m. Tuscan Path 1800 x 900mm Luminer screen panel, \$99. 1220 x 610 x 18mm AA grade mixed hardwood marine plywood. \$57.30. Porta 25 x 8mm 2.4m Tasmanian oak DAR moulding, \$14.18. Plants and mulch of your choice.



Look for contrast with a row of lush weeping lilly pilly next to potted zamia.



Put a *Magnolia* 'Teddy Bear' in bed with the dark-leaved *Raphiolepis* 'Oriental Pearl', *Pittosporum* 'Hole in One' and *Lomandra* 'Tanika'.

### STEPS



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6